

TOWARDS A NON-RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATION

Scott James Sinclair Shackleton

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University of St. Andrews

TOWARDS A NON RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATION

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Scott JS Shackleton



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30 November 2002

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to answer some of the questions left us by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and pastor. Prior to his execution by the Nazi regime on 9th April 1945, Bonhoeffer wrote a series of letters to his friend Eberhard Bethge from Tegel Prison, Berlin. In these letters he examined notions of a *non religious* Christianity and he wrote out a short outline for a book, sadly never to be written, which would expand on these *religionless* thoughts. It is to the vacuum left, by the book that was never written, that this work aims to address itself and fill. There have of course been other works dedicated to such a cause but none have addressed fully the situational theology which gave rise to such thought, with especial consideration given to a ministry and theology of chaplaincy as a backdrop. Thus, this work identifies a correlation of theology and practice between chaplains from the First World War and today, to Bonhoeffer.

Religionless Christianity arose within a climate of war and collapse within the institutional churches in Germany. This situation plunged individual ministries into a deep unknown, for which Bonhoeffer sought an answer. For Bonhoeffer, it would lead to direct opposition of government and church, fighting specifically for the cause of the Jews. For Studdert Kennedy the deep unknown was experienced on the fields of the Western Front and for the commando chaplains, our work would send us to places such as the Falkland Islands, Kuwait, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Nicaragua and Afghanistan. This work shows the link between situation and thought through these biographical studies, revealing the roots which allowed the thought of *religionless Christianity* to grow in the earth of war for Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The worth of this research is that it shows a way forward for ministry today, towards the new millennium, post modern individual. It records examples of vibrant and truly ecumenical team ministries which flourish during a war fighting situation, underpinned throughout by a sound spiritual discipline. Here we learn what makes ecumenical team ministries truly flourish, in an environment of genuine trust and reliance. A common thread emerges in this study, as advocated by those clergymen examined in this work, working on the margins of society for the institutional church in the last century. We learn that to be successful in a post modern era, the church must avoid past mistakes and any changes to be made, must be critiqued against the thoughts of Kennedy, Bonhoeffer and George MacLeod. This work concludes that real ministry, to ones community, is what truly matters, underpinned by a sound theology of the cross and strengthened by a maintenance of a spiritual discipline amongst ecumenical team ministries. It holds up the importance of the recognition of the orders of ministry between the churches, as being the final action which leads us towards a true understanding of Bonhoeffer's *non religious interpretation*.

Foreword

This work is being submitted for the award of PhD at St. Mary's College, St. Andrews University, in October 2001. It was researched and written between 1994 - 2001. It is all my own work. It has travelled with me through military operations in the desert of Kuwait, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Nicaragua and Turkey. It is been taken on exercise throughout Britain and around the Mediterranean rim. It has journeyed with me by sea to central and northern America and home again. It has moved with me and my family from Glasgow to Arbroath and then onto Plymouth. This work has been transferred from one lap top to another, from *Word* to *Works* and back again. It has truly been a companion in time with me and the final product is a result of our journey together.

I have been greatly helped over the last seven years by both my university supervisors, Dr. George Hall and following George's death, Professor Trevor Hart. George taught and encouraged me to think laterally. He thought with a free spirit like his nature and he is sadly missed. Professor Hart helped me systemise my thoughts and without his help, understanding, patience and friendship this work would not have been completed. Thanks must also go to Professor Bill Shaw for his background guidance and encouragement and to the Hope Trust for financial assistance. I hope that all those mentioned above will feel that this resulting work makes all their support worthwhile.

Finally, I must pay thanks to my wife Gillian and my two sons Adam and Cameron. Firstly, for putting up with a father who, when he was at home (rather occasionally), tended to be either sitting at his computer writing 'that thesis', or sitting in his chair reading a book. Secondly, I would like to thank them for allowing me to do a job which I enjoy greatly, being a commando trained Royal Navy and Marine Chaplain. Without my family's support and encouragement in this venture I could not have written this work. My wife rather than me deserves the medals for suffering long separations rather than any operations served. I would like also to thank my own father, who by his own example in ministry showed me how it should be done.

As I mentioned earlier this work has been completed *per mare per terram*, and I dedicate this work to all those in the Royal Marines and Royal Navy who have given their lives in the last seven years that we in the United Kingdom might have the freedom to write such thoughts as are contained in the following pages. May we never take this fact too easily for granted.

Scott JS Shackleton

Introduction

This work has been split into five main areas of research and this is reflected through individual chapter headings. The aim of the work is to answer the questions left us by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and pastor, who was martyred by the Nazi regime on the 9th April, 1945 at Flossenburg Concentration Camp. His questions, which he asked us through his letters to his friend Eberhard Bethge and written whilst he was imprisoned in Tegel Prison, Berlin, are summed up in the title of this work, *Towards a Non Religious Interpretation*. Under this title we will look at further notions of *religionless Christianity and a non religious interpretation*.

The thesis will start by looking at my own experiences as a Commando Chaplain, serving with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, during operational tours of duty in places such as Kuwait, Kosovo and Afghanistan, where I led a variety of ecumenical ministry teams. We will then look at my research from HMS OCEAN, the navy's largest warship today, during my time when Chaplain of the ship. Finally, we will close the chapter by broadening our debate to include the research of Grace Davie, to place our thoughts in a civilian, as well as a military church setting. What will emerge and re-appear as a running theme throughout the work is that, people today no longer think denominationally, beyond nationalistic or cultural bounds. Indeed, many now outwardly oppose strong

views on exclusive denominationalism. We will note that within these ecumenical team ministries, that their integrity is maintained through the observance of a strong spiritual discipline. Here, a joint life of prayer flourishes, allowing trust and honest debate to exist amongst clergy, truly living in community. This acceptance and recognition of one another, becomes a key to success for future team ministries advocated both in a military and civilian church setting within this work.

Chapter Two looks at the situation faced by World War 1 Padres and the response of the church to the conflict. We will discover that many of my own and Bonhoeffer's findings are predated in the thoughts and writings of these men, both during and after the war. We will examine the parallels in thought and language between Studdert Kennedy (better known as *Woodbine Willie* during the war) and Bonhoeffer. Indeed, we will show that Studdert Kennedy developed, along with other World War 1 chaplains, thoughts on a *non religious* Christianity, based around a theology of the cross and conveyed through *non religious language* some twenty five years before Bonhoeffer. We will close this chapter looking briefly at the thought of George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community and note how he was inspired to form that community due to the influence of World War 1 chaplains. Here we will especially observe that the church flourishes best when it is truly in community with its parishioners, and that to be in true community is the goal of all ministry teams.

In Chapter Three, we will look at the meaning of such ideas and how they arose in Bonhoeffer's thought through his opposition towards the National Socialist Government and especially its anti Jewish policies. Bonhoeffer aimed to answer the questions which he asked himself in prison, in a book which he would write following his release. Sadly it would never be written. He left us however a short outline of that book and this work has aimed to put some flesh on these ideas left us, recognising that over fifty years have passed since Bonhoeffer's writings.

In Chapter Four we will study a short history of naval chaplaincy, allowing us the opportunity to compare our modern study of naval chaplaincy, with that which has gone before. We will note, just as we did with the chaplains serving during the Great War, that chaplaincy during operations, has not changed over the years. We will read with interest some of the recommendations for change, by chaplains long past, that should be taken more seriously today. Perhaps most interestingly in this chapter we will look at the previously unpublished thoughts of the Reverend Albert Hempenstall following his time of service as a commando unit chaplain during the Falklands War. A time when he was most distinctly in community with his people.

Our final chapter opens with a *stocktaking of Christianity* for today and follows Bonhoeffer's scheme for his book that was never written. This stocktaking helps tell us where we are in terms of Christianity and the masses today, and develops the

outline in Bonhoeffer's book answering the question of *Who Christ really is for us today* when discussing *what we really believe*. Our stocktaking for today will include a study of the thoughts of John Leavack, in his book, *The Potential Church*, and we will consider the example of an inner city ministry from St. Francis in the East, Church of Scotland and its outreach project called Church House. Finally, we will bring our stocktaking right up to date by looking at the most recent report for change within the Church of Scotland, in its report entitled *Church Without Walls* and its determination to truly place the church in community with its parish, by encouraging some changes in church thought and structure. Following the study and as mentioned above, we will ask what we really and need to believe as Christians. We will ask what we truly need to share with people, that the Gospel might be brought to a new generation of people within our society in Britain. Our theological thoughts will be moulded around both Kennedy's and Bonhoeffer's belief in an incarnational theology of life and cross and we note the importance for maintaining this recaptured faith (and avoiding profanation) by the following of a spiritual discipline, by the smaller but rejuvenated Christian community in the 21st century.

We will conclude our study by discovering that the recommendations for change within the Church of Scotland report, *Church Without Walls*, are not new and that the theology and ecclesiology behind the recommendations were held by many chaplains during the Great War. It is about being truly a part of the community in which you serve. These ideas

were an inspiration to George MacLeod and largely responsible for the formation of the Iona Community. Quite independently, Dietrich Bonhoeffer also discovered these thoughts to be true during his struggles with the Nazi authorities. Here we recognise the link between situation and thought. For all these thoughts emerged in a time when the old church structures had failed to cope with the new environment in which they were placed during the two world wars. Thus, they were no longer a useful instrument for the conveying of the Gospel to God's people at that time. A new theology and outlook for church structure emerged. A *religionless* (non denominational) church was advocated by MacLeod and Bonhoeffer, where all forms of church order would be recognised within creedal guidelines. We will conclude that it is the true recognition, of the validity of different church orders and ministries, that is what really matters when considering a *non religious* approach and *interpretation* of the Gospel. It is within this context of recognition that ecumenical team ministries flourish, and thus fully allow a *Church Without Walls* for a nation, to come into being. Until the day comes, when there is true recognition of ministries between the churches, we will continue on and only towards, a *non religious interpretation* of Christianity.

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Chapter One: Operational Chaplaincy

When the institutional church in its various forms is not present, what is left of the church? When one is no longer inextricably bound to that institution and its necessary rule of life, to what or whom does one bind oneself? A form of *religionless Christianity* can arise. A situation of conflict and war is often the catalyst for such a situation, and out of this, a primitive faith structure emerges, centred upon the person of the living Christ. Here, there is neither Greek nor Jew, Protestant nor Catholic. A Christian community forms which is truly non denominational. Clerical teams act as one in Christ, far beyond the domestic arrangements of their sending churches at home. A discovery is made about the true catholicity of the church. A truly ecumenical church exists. These are the themes which run through this work. However, in the following chapter we will concentrate on my own and my colleagues existential experiences as military personnel. We will identify a form of *religionless Christianity* amongst cleric and laity alike, borne out of true community. To close this chapter, we will compare these thoughts and results borne, from experience and survey, with findings from within the domestic church environment on religious attitudes.

I. A COMMANDO CHAPLAINCY

I can clearly remember the first time I led a service of Holy Communion on board HMS OCEAN. It was spring 1998 and the ship was sailing from Barrow-in-Furness to the Portsmouth Naval

Base Dockyard. I was standing in an unfinished compartment on 2 deck, behind an old office desk, which was acting as my communion table. It was roped up tightly to the port and starboard bulkheads to prevent any unwanted movement. A white linen sheet procured from stores was acting as the altar cloth, on which was sat a ship's table mat designed to prevent any unwanted slipping of cup and plate. In front of me, sat upon unmatched plastic chairs, were a half dozen or so men. They were surrounded by cardboard boxes containing the contents of the chaplaincy office which was yet to be built. Two modern Christian posters were cello-taped to the grey bulkheads forward and aft, one depicting the healing hands of Jesus, and the other, behind the Communion Table, appropriately showing the symbols of bread and wine. The compartment was full, the catholic church had gathered.

I had arrived to work as the first Chaplain to this new model, sixth generation HMS OCEAN in February 1998. The first commission ship's company met at Barrow-in-Furness where HMS OCEAN was in build. We were an excited bunch, for it is not often that you are lucky enough to be part of a new ship's life from the start. The ship would become the largest ship in the Fleet and the Royal Navy's first ever purpose built Amphibious Aircraft Carrier or Landing Platform Helicopter (LPH). She would carry a commando unit strength of Royal Marines, up to twelve aircraft, with associated commando helicopter force personnel and a ship's company to deliver the Commandos to a suitable beach head. The assembled ship's company would number between eight to eleven hundred

personnel, depending upon the scenario.

I had been selected to become the Chaplain, HMS OCEAN, by the Reverend Dr. Charles Stewart QHC. Stewart, like myself, an ordained Minister of the Church of Scotland, was the first ever non Anglican to become the Chaplain of the Fleet and the Director General Naval Chaplaincy Service. Prior to Stewart, all previous heads of the Naval Chaplaincy Service had been Anglican, by naval law.¹ Stewart was also the first ever non Anglican Chaplain to be the Chaplain to a capital ship, HMS INVINCIBLE. I was the second. The advent of non Anglican Chaplains to capital ships and indeed commando units raised the dilemma of the distribution of Holy Communion. No longer could the Naval Chaplaincy Service guarantee an Anglican Eucharist throughout the Fleet. Whether you were in the middle of the Atlantic or on top of a glacier in Norway, Anglicans may now be required to receive communion from someone of another denomination. Further to this change, it would mean in practice that some of the most preferred appointments in the Naval Chaplaincy Service would become open to non Anglicans.

These policy changes resulted in what is now called *Any Denominational Chaplaincy* appointments. These appointments would be so arranged for all sea going and Royal Marines Units. The working practise for such an appointment would mean that all Chaplains must separate an ecumenical, service

¹ A fuller background to Royal Naval Chaplaincy can be found in Chapter Four.

of the Word (organised for the whole ship's company) from a service of Holy Communion. This it was believed would allow everyone to attend a service together without the exclusivity that a Eucharistic service may bring. At another time on the Sunday, a service of Holy Communion would be offered where it would be clearly stated that the service was one belonging to the denomination of the celebrating Chaplain and the relevant rules for reception could then be explained. This might result in a Roman Catholic Chaplain offering Holy Communion to a non Roman Catholic under a hospitality arrangement, wherein there would be no other possibility of the person receiving Holy Communion in the near future. A Reformed Chaplain may have an open table invitation, whilst still understanding the difficulties of some Roman Catholic personnel with reception. Thus the Chaplain would offer the Reserved Sacrament through a nominated lay Roman Catholic Eucharistic Minister. Such would be the rules surrounding the institutional churches services on board HMS OCEAN. These new ecumenical rules would be a new experience for me.

In 1993 I became the Chaplain, 45 Commando Group Royal Marines. This was prior to the any denominational chaplaincy appointments and thus no policy had been set as regards to how a Chaplain should behave in a singleton unit. At this time, all major units, other than 45 Commando Group Royal Marines, had an Anglican Chaplain, the declared majority denominational group within the Royal Navy. From time to time a Church of Scotland and Free Church or Roman Catholic Chaplain would turn up to look after their people in these units, but mostly, the

Anglican Chaplain would organise for the needs of non conformists using local civilian clergy. The reason there was no need for a change of policy towards chaplaincy when I arrived in Arbroath was both geographical and social. The Church of Scotland was the national church and although the unit still had a declared Anglican majority, it did number many Scots in its ranks. Arbroath is also a long way from Portsmouth or Plymouth where most Anglican clergy were based and is closer to home for the Church of Scotland chaplains. Thus did a singleton unit appointment end up in the hands of a non conformist Chaplain, if perhaps with no policy change.

Before I joined the Royal Navy it had never occurred to me that ministers from the Church of England would not receive Holy Communion from a Church of Scotland Minister, nor not recognise his or her ordination. I had never encountered the seeming difference between a minister and a priest, for in Scotland all ministers were Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The priesthood for me meant Roman Catholicism. The Church of England as far as I understood it was protestant, and a national church akin to my church. Sure, the Church of England was Episcopalian in structure and used a different liturgy to my church, but they were part of the same limb of the catholic church. How wrong could I be?

I started commando course training in May 1993 at Commando Training Centre, Royal Marines in Devon. On recruit course with me was Father Simon Beveridge, an Anglican Chaplain from an Anglo Catholic background. We became great friends during

the training and remain so. On reflection however, our discussions over the first few years resulted only in further separating us in terms of churchmanship and ecclesiology. This arose for two reasons. Firstly, our cultural backgrounds in terms of churchmanship were poles apart, and secondly our church education process, in preparation for the calling to the ordained ministry, varied significantly in both content and emphasis. Simon was raised in the atmosphere of an Anglo Catholic congregation in Exeter and studied at Chichester College, noted for its catholic teaching. One main topic for discussion when Simon was in training was the ordination of women priests into the Church of England, a subject which all Anglo Catholics, including Simon, felt strongly about at the time. I cared nothing about this debate and wondered what everyone was getting so upset about.

This reaction of course was hardly surprising coming from someone born and bred into the Church of Scotland, a son of the Manse in Glasgow and Greenock. Catholicism meant Roman, which to my mind meant a somewhat immigrant church from Ireland whose purpose was to look after the rather estranged Irish-Scoto community based largely in the west coast of the country. Whereas, the Church of Scotland for me, represented the choice of religion for the majority of Scots. I was largely unaware of an Anglican church community, other than that it existed where there was normally an affluent English ex pat community. It was, like Roman Catholicism, non representative of the chosen religion of the Scots. Educationally, Church of Scotland Ministers were trained at

one of the four senior universities and were of a high academic standard. My view, on both my Roman Catholic and Anglican colleges, was that they were weak intellectually and dogmatically driven!

These many differences between Simon and I seemed at times insurmountable. We could not understand what one another was talking about. Indeed, we spoke a different religious language, belonging to separate religious communities, one Church of Scotland and Free Church, the other Church of England. We were not then in community. The simplest example of a title to fall out over, was that of Minister. In Scotland, a Minister means a person ordained to preach the Word on a Sunday and be responsible for the administration of the two sacraments of baptism and communion. The title could be said to be one which has weight. In England the title Minister could be awarded to an Anglican deacon and as such the pastoral ministry is recognised separately to the ordination to the priesthood. Thus, the validity of the sacrament of Holy Communion could only be in and through the order of the priesthood.

The debate of course would rage on in other areas such as episcopacy, intention and orders. It would spread into church furniture descriptions, chalice or cup, paten or plate, altar or table. All these words could cause upset when used in conversation, for to one they could mean a straightforward principle but to the other something perhaps more sinister. All the confusion arose out of and because of our ties to our

institutional sending churches, from which we had just arrived in the Royal Navy. Interestingly, at the time of our great misunderstandings, neither of us had been plunged into an operational scenario. We were still domesticated naval chaplains.

It was at this time that I started reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his search for a non religious language for Christianity, and indeed a non religious structure for the Christian Church. He would of course do his writing and thinking largely beyond the walls and influence of his own Lutheran denomination. He would conduct his later thinking surrounded not by church walls but by those of Tegel Prison in Berlin. His companions would be fellow prisoners of the Nazi regime, not members of his congregation. He would become their Chaplain as fellow sufferer, he shared many of their conspiratorial views towards Hitler. He was one of them. A form of *religionless Christianity* naturally arose for Bonhoeffer as he ministered to his fellow prisoners, with whom he lived in community. They were all of one company and beyond institutional church boundaries.

In October 1994, 45 Commando Group Royal Marines, deployed on Operation DRIVER to Kuwait. Iraqi forces had moved close to the border and were deemed a substantial threat to Kuwait once again. This joint US/British deployment was designed to prevent a repeat invasion. Operation DRIVER was my first deployment into a potential war fighting situation. Prior to deployment, my first year in Arbroath had been one of

adjustment to the fact that no one was interested in going to church on Sunday (as compared to my previous parish experience in St. Andrews). This unwillingness to attend church services would be true both in base or in exercise environments.

Indeed, pastorally the church was quiet, with most Marines and their families seeking the advice of the secular welfare department. Was this my fault? Was I the wrong denomination? I walked around a lot, meeting and greeting folk and felt at times like the unit fool. I was the new boy with no operational experience, a young man who was tolerated in a kind manner by the men, but whose purpose seemed largely irrelevant to their lives.

The unit had just returned from an operational deployment to Belize and was especially tight, so my feeling of isolation was understandable, indeed it is not just the Chaplain who may have felt as I did. That said, and what I felt was unique in my position as Chaplain, was my realisation that the vast majority of men and their families had never truly met a clergyman and nor did they want to. My professional office was thus not needed to the extent of all other departments in the unit. Clergymen, I came to understand, were associated with funerals and death and the occasional happy rite of passage in Christenings and weddings. We provided a decent service in these matters, but attendance at a regular Sunday service and indeed commitment to a living God was old fashioned. We would be the last chance saloon stop for Marines with welfare problems, when all other avenues had failed. We were seen as a soft touch by the men and command.

As I continued to study the thoughts of the First World War Padres during this period, I took comfort from the fact that they too felt this sense of alienation from their men and families because of their position as clergymen. We will further examine this thought in chapter two and look at how this sense of non belonging and relevance was overcome both theologically and in practice, to put them in community with their people.

On my first Sunday at church in Arbroath three people attended, on the second no one turned up and so I stopped Sunday worship and moved it to a midweek timing when the men were at work. I put on a weekly communion service to meet the needs of the Anglican majority in the unit. I was told that this is what they would expect (by some in the Anglican hierarchy) and I was told that some men may not feel comfortable receiving communion from me, but not to be offended. By my third Sunday in Arbroath I realised that no one had a problem with my 'orders' but many had a bigger problem with chaplaincy and the church itself. Their denomination I came to realise, to all but a few, represented their cultural roots and bore no relation whatsoever to church attendance. If there were any problems with my ordination and appointment to Arbroath it was within the Naval Chaplaincy Service, not with the men and their families I was sent to serve.

The deployment to Kuwait changed everything and the domestic Naval Chaplain would become an operational one. Operations

always do this for a Chaplain. Out of them you are either made or broken. You become a member of the team through shared experience. During the first month of Operation DRIVER, the commando prepared for the worst, as you must always do and we dug into defensive positions protecting Kuwait City. A total battle group of 1,400 men and women deployed with us. I would be the only British Chaplain and responsible for all the pastoral and spiritual needs of the group. The pastoral side of work was busy immediately with the general problems that life throws up at men when deployed. Wives and girlfriends leaving them because they just had had enough, debt problems, illnesses with children, parents and loved ones. Sadly, notification of deaths.

Amongst all this, each man's situation would be judged by command (with my advice and the help of the welfare officer in Arbroath), as to whether he should return home. Balanced against this decision was the operational scenario and our primary requirement being to fight and win. Could men be spared? A more pleasant side to the pastoral work was the establishment of an impromptu folk club, started in the church tent back garden (an area in the sand cordoned off by cam netting) where a guitarist and some singers gathered at night. I seem to remember a Marine who sang John Denver songs quite brilliantly. The rule for entrance to the club, where you would be given a free 'wet' (Marine speak for a cup of tea or coffee) was to tell everyone how you had managed to 'skive' off some work that day. We did this to act as a counter culture to the people who tell you that they are always busy,

even if they are not! More importantly however, it was hoped that here in the tent, the men could be more themselves.

Spiritually things were very interesting. When men face risk to life and limb the trivialities of life which all too often consume us seem to drift off. All that matters is doing your job well, not letting your friends down, getting home to your families. In amongst this we all have thoughts about how on return we will lead better lives, or at least try to. Men and women also learn to pray in these situations. Thus does the church seem more relevant. But what does the church have to say in this situation?

We will see from our later studies into the thought of the First World War chaplains and in particular Studdert Kennedy, that what does make sense to men at war is Jesus, His sayings, the way He lived His life and His bravery in death. In Kuwait, Jesus became a fellow traveller and comrade with the men. As a Chaplain, my job was simple, to tell His story. A story for which the men had ears that were willing to hear. For His life and ultimately the cross, rooted Jesus Christ's existence in a life shared with my men, hope was offered of eternal life through Him, by His resurrection.

This incarnational theology, was represented most clearly for me through the celebration of Holy Communion. Somehow this ritualistic act made sense (perhaps truly for the first time), for there was no hymn singing, no building, no great numbers of men and women to fall back on to enhance worship. Indeed,

the centrality of Holy Communion as the main act of worship for men at war remains with me today, for it speaks of the incarnation in a definite and realisable way for the men.

It would be easy to conclude that the men responded to chaplaincy in a much more positive way because they were scared they would die and wanted an insurance policy in their back pocket. It is my experience that there is some truth to this, but it is not the driving force for attendance, nor the force that would bring a Marine to the Padre's tent with spiritual questions. The main force driving the men, was that they were now dealing with the bigger questions in life when in the desert. They had more time now to think and less to distract them in their quest for the answers to these life questions. They had the space now both spiritually and physically to come to church, or attend when church came to them. They were also building up a personal relationship with their Padre, they knew² him. The men hoped that despite all his failings, he might teach them something about the truth of life in Jesus. As I was reading Studdert Kennedy at this

² This thought of 'knowing' the Padre is an important theme that runs throughout this work. To 'know' someone in this context is to be with and to share with someone (whom I would suggest you would not normally choose to be/share with) something quite unique and intense in terms of situation (danger). This thought is coupled on to the 'knowing', which is already taken as a given prior to deployment, namely that of common background. This common background is the shared experience of both men and Padre of their Commando Training, with all its sufferings and ultimate successes. Here the ritualistic initiation ceremony takes place through the process of Green Beret course and offers a new place of belonging (culturally and spiritually along with the physical) which underpins the new church situation and indeed the overall knowledge of Padre and men towards one another. This allows one to speak of a Green Beret church, without it being institutionally driven but rather as a fact. It overarches and subsumes denominational backgrounds which belong to the 'old self', that of the person who is pre commando course and operations. This thought is put in statistical context through the HMS OCEAN study results and looked at through the eyes of the WW1 Padres in Chapter two. In chapter three where we consider Bonhoeffer's 'religionless' Christianity and what it means, we note its arrival through the new situation facing a Germany where the institutional church has collapsed and a new age arisen.

time, I realised that he was right when he spoke of chaplaincy being simply about being with people in both a spiritual and physical sense. To be of use you need to be there and share their hardships. Worship thus for me, was not about great preaching, how can anyone preach in the traditional manner to eight people in the desert with a wind blowing? It was not about lovely music and hymn singing. It was not even about a beautiful liturgy. Worship was about a group of human beings from the same family, sharing the same risks, wanting to believe more and hope more, that the God as revealed by Jesus was their and all our God, that He was involved in the life of all creation and that we lived in His providence. We met together as symbols of this hope whilst preparing for war.

No one cared about what the church rules were concerning Holy Communion. I did invite an American RC Army Chaplain to say Mass but no one turned up other than a lapsed Anglican whom I persuaded to come not to embarrass the Priest³. So we met and worshipped. Confirmed and unconfirmed held the bread and cup and thought of Jesus sacrifice. We thought of His bravery and the bravery of the early Christians, Peter's denials gave us hope. And we knew God was there, somehow.

A true sense of Christian ecumenism struck me for the first time in Kuwait, where somehow previous institutional church loyalties became superseded by our newly formed, natural,

³ It is worth mentioning here the fact that this is not always the case and so I have always persevered with inviting a Roman Catholic Priest whenever possible to say Mass. In both Kosovo and Afghanistan people would use the Priests services but in small numbers.

ecumenical Christian community. I began to see myself as a product of my own institutional church, with a blinkered and at times prejudiced viewpoint on theological and ecclesiological matters. Slowly, I came to understand why Simon (my Anglo Catholic colleague), and I, could not understand or agree with one another. I started to care less about the squabbles of the institutional churches (within or out with the navy), as I learnt how the church could and can be, when Christians return to the basics of the faith, at the foot of the cross, together.

Both Kennedy's and Bonhoeffer's work now started to make more and more sense to me. When you take away the traditional parish church from its environment, what do you have left? For Studdert Kennedy it was when the institutional, domestic church was put onto the fields of Flanders and the Somme that it was, in its traditional sense found wanting. The chaplains from the Great War would now start talking of ecumenism, new church structures, the importance of the theology of the cross and sacramentalism, truly being alongside people and speaking the men's language in a manner that is understandable. So too for Bonhoeffer, when the churches had all but collapsed under the Nazi regime, what was left? And so notions of a religionless Christianity arose, a new Christianity, ecumenical, self financing, cleansed from hubris with a new language, a non religious one.

The language would be learnt by being with people, learning how they live and speak because you are one of them. How

similar what Bonhoeffer was saying to that of Studdert Kennedy twenty years before. Why, simply because they were both clerics forced beyond traditional boundaries of denominational ministry. So it is with chaplaincy today in the military environment. What I was discovering in Kuwait was that Studdert Kennedy and Bonhoeffer were right. Not because I thought it, but because I knew it. Perhaps 'religionless Christianity' was a situational theology arising from a time when the institutional, domestic church had collapsed and was not present or capable anymore, to answer the questions and serve the needs of the common people?

Following my return from Kuwait everything changed. I now was truly the Padre, 45 Commando Group, Royal Marines. This was simply because I had been there in Kuwait. My goal on return and ignited in Kuwait, was to pursue my quest of uniting the theology of Studdert Kennedy and Bonhoeffer into a theology of chaplaincy for today. Having achieved this link I hoped to look at this theology in terms of broader church mission in the civilian environment in the post modern situation. A few years later, I would ask the question, does this link into the Church of Scotland's most recent missionary venture, a 'Church Without Walls'? Was not this new venture merely what the Padres of the First War and Bonhoeffer in the Second War were trying to say and do? Has it not arisen now because the civilian church environment has taken most of a century to discover that the church is no longer a part of the common man and women's life, as Studdert Kennedy and Bonhoeffer had discovered years before? With numbers being driven down and

money short the old answers from the church were not working and so a 'church without walls' concept has arisen. Is not this a chaplaincy concept which at its heart attempts to put the church back in touch with people? In the final chapter of this work we will study closely such thoughts, having identified first whether the above thoughts are truly representative of what Studdert Kennedy and Bonhoeffer were saying.

To close this section, I would like to finish by considering some aspects of three other operational tours that I have served on as a Chaplain. In 1995, I served as the Padre, 45 Commando Group, Royal Marines on an operational tour of Northern Ireland, in 2000 I served as the Multi National Brigade (Centre) and 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, Senior Chaplain in Kosovo and in 2002 once more I was the Senior Chaplain, 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, for Operation JACANA in Afghanistan. During these operations, I would discover the truth about the nature of *religionless Christianity*, as being a faith structure which emerges naturally on operations, beyond the reaches of the institutional and domestic churches, and which results in a truly ecumenical church, based around a strong incarnational theology.

When in Northern Ireland, (which followed close on the heels of our deployment to Kuwait) I stuck to my premise of all services being one where we celebrated Holy Communion. My reasons remained the same, for there was no great opportunity

for hymn singing or preaching. The focus rather would be a simple ritual that seemed to connect with most of the men and made sense, for it expressed to them themes of sacrifice and suffering, mixed in with duty, commission, service and hope.

In Kosovo, I took on the additional duties of the Senior Padre, where I had six British and five Scandinavian chaplains in the team. The denominational and service mix was one Presbyterian (me), and two Anglicans, one broad church and the other an Anglo-Catholic, serving with the Royal Marines. We had three British Army chaplains, one Roman Catholic, one Baptist and a Methodist. Our Scandinavian colleagues were all Lutheran. There was a strong sense of 'being all of one company' amongst us despite our different backgrounds. This was largely because our work and place of work was the same. Our goals were shared, our experiences on a daily basis similar. We were of the same community. This shared-ness certainly enhanced the depths of our mutual prayer life which in turn fed our sense of oneness. Here, in a situation for which none of us had been prepared by our sending churches and where these institutions played no part, we understood what Bonhoeffer meant by a sense of a new church sustained by a disciplined spiritual life in community to serve a secular world⁴. Perhaps our sense of togetherness was enhanced by the tragic situation around us? We were all well aware of the difficult religious circumstances surrounding the conflict in

⁴ Bonhoeffer would in fact describe this new church as one which would be truly Christian by being *non religious*. The integrity of this new church would be maintained through what he calls *the maintenance of the arcane or secret discipline*. We will discuss these issues fully in chapter three.

Kosovo between Serb and Kosovar Albanian. To be Serb was to be Orthodox, to be an Albanian you were a Muslim⁵.

As chaplains we ministered to all our people, as well as coming into regular contact with the various local religious representatives (mostly to help distribute aid to their communities). One could not help but notice the social and religious divide which consumed this land. As in Northern Ireland, the debate was based around ethnic origins as much as religious loyalties. We all enjoyed speaking to Islamic leaders about the Koran and noted the importance of furthering the dialogue between Christianity and Islam (something especially pertinent today in light of the bombing on the Twin Towers and the wider war on terrorism).

We would get alongside the embattled Serb Orthodox Priest who was trying to minister to an increasingly dispirited people. We would sit with a church leader who appeared to be more politician than cleric and yet discover that this was only half the truth and that he still yearned for the monastic life, from whence the war pulled him. We worshipped with some evangelicals who held two hour long services in Pristina, said in Albanian and English. We distributed aid to all the ethnic groups, which had been collected at home by our families and local communities and a school extension was paid for through monies raised amongst the troops. We supported as a team the Women and Child Trauma Centre in Pristina which looked after

⁵ The only exception to this rule was the small but expanding Albanian Evangelical Church.

those women and children widowed and orphaned by the war and who were trying to rebuild their lives through the medical care and education provisions offered in the centre.

Amongst all of this we met real people face to face. We watched and talked with people as they tried to put their lives and society together. We realised that there were more important things in life than both ethnic background and creed. We learned that it was not the power of military might that would ultimately save the world (our might just ensured a steady peace), but rather it would be love. No wonder denominational differences between the chaplaincy team seemed irrelevant to us. Not only did this thought effect the chaplaincy team, but also our people who would worship together on a daily basis. My ecumenical and multi faith experiences from Kuwait were now being broadened further in Kosovo. And it was with these thoughts in mind that we clerics returned from our tours of duty in Kosovo. Not surprisingly, some in the civilian churches thought we had lost our way when we expressed our new sense of Christian community and faith (over and against hard fought denominational stances). They could not seem to understand that things that may have previously worried us with regard to denominationalism, simply did not worry us at all now. They remained tied to the institutional and domestic sending church outlook, we had gone beyond that viewpoint through our experiences. Understanding who people are, enjoying and tolerating differences and loving and serving those in need, seemed to be more relevant to us.

On Operation JACANA in Afghanistan we did not have the opportunity to meet any local clerics, the situation was simply too fraught. There were five chaplains in the team, four serving with the Royal Marines and one with the RAF. All the postings were any denominational and we all worked very closely together. For us all, OP JACANA was the most threatening war fighting role we had ever been in. Quite simply and in a situation like this, you do not know whether you will get home. Wills are checked, personal life insurances increased and goodbyes said. It is both the most exciting and professionally challenging situation a military person can be placed in and it is also the most sobering and frightening. We as chaplains faced the same dangers as the men, again we were one.

The church experience and spiritual renewal which we were all a part of in Afghanistan was extraordinary. Men rediscovered their faith and some found it for the first time, for here the relevance of Christianity and chaplaincy was apparent. Once more for us all, the big life questions were being asked. The answers were largely offered by the team through pastoral care and worship. Regular evening prayer was well attended, but most extraordinary was the achievement of the unit Chaplain to 45 Commando group, Royal Marines, the Reverend Tim Wilkinson Royal Navy, who was attracting thirty or so men to communion services in the mountains. The vast majority of men were non church goers but were seeking a spirituality founded in and around the Christian message. Men found solace prior to live operations in receiving communion and making confession,

carrying small Bibles and wearing crosses. It was a very privileged position to be in as a Chaplain. Denominational differences between men mattered no more. The catholicity of the Christian Church was apparent for all to see and know. It was this type of experience (but in far greater depth) which so inspired the World War 1 Padres to recommend sweeping changes to the civilian church on their return. We shall study these reports in the next chapter, but it will not surprise us to hear that one of the main emphases was ecumenical development between the churches. The experiences of war change people and it gives them new eyes to see the answers to solve old problems. In the following chapter we will also look at George MacLeod's ministry and how the Iona Community emerged as a result and an answer to his wartime experiences. We shall note that it was the failure of the civilian churches to act ecumenically at home, and replicate what was achieved by the church in Flanders, which forced MacLeod to form a 'new community' to rejuvenate the church in Scotland. This would be done to serve the needs of the new generation who shared the experiences of war and it would be based around his interpretation of the 'old ways'⁶.

We return briefly now to that first service of Holy Communion on board HMS OCEAN which I mentioned at the start of the chapter. What is so distinct about this Eucharist that I

⁶ As we shall see in chapter two, MacLeod used the early Christianity (as he perceived it) of the Celtic Church to unite people denominationally in the British environment. He wanted to pre-date his understanding of the denominational divisions, the 'isms' of church history which currently divided peoples understanding of themselves as Christians. Macleod believed that Celtic Christianity offered a common heritage making people 'all of one company' as Christians. He would further use the Celtic theme of Christian mission from Iona as a signpost for a new mission to mainland Scotland and beyond.

should single it out amongst the rest? Having, as I mentioned, set up the compartment as a church and with a gathered few before me, I was required by the Naval Chaplaincy Service to tell everyone present that I was an ordained Minister of the Church of Scotland. The communion table was open but I should realise that not all might feel comfortable to receive from me, due to the non recognition of my ordination by the Anglican or Roman Catholic Church. As I started on my statement, a voice from the back of the compartment piped up, "Oh for God's sake Scott get on with it. We all know you are a Jock, you give it away with the accent..." How is it that so often the needs of our churches as institutional bodies bears absolutely no similarity to the needs of our people? It often makes our churches and indeed Christianity look completely ridiculous.

With that in mind, I set off on my ministry on board HMS OCEAN to find out what were indeed the views and needs of my people, as far as religion and pastoral care were concerned. I no longer believed what I was being told by the chaplaincy hierarchy about denominational needs, for their needs seemed to derive more from making square pegs fit into round holes (for the sake of different church rules and regulations), than to serve the needs of our people. Where then do those in the Royal Navy, chaplaincy's customers, stand on religious issues? Do they struggle with the problems of ecumenism which so often trouble the church? Are their problems of a different nature? How much influence does the church have upon them today? It was in seeking answers to questions such as these that the HMS

OCEAN survey was conceived. It would also statistically test out my views on church and ecumenism discussed above, which were formulated out of my experience of operational chaplaincy. Throughout this time, my experience continued to be measured against the thoughts and writings of Studdert Kennedy and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in particular.

II. HMS OCEAN SURVEY

The HMS OCEAN Survey of religious backgrounds and attitudes to chaplaincy (and its future) was devised and conducted by me as Ship's Chaplain, in November 1998. It followed Operation TELLAR, a humanitarian aid operation in Nicaragua and Honduras, which arose in the wake of the highly destructive Hurricane Mitch. This field research was designed for the moment, exploring reactions to our situation during a long and at times traumatic operation, conducted on land and at sea. The ship had been away from home port for three months when the survey was conducted, which allowed a pattern of sea and chaplaincy life to develop with the ship's company, both in terms of pastoral care offered and worship. The chaplaincy team on board consisted of myself (Presbyterian) and two Anglicans, each of us responsible for our own command structure (not denominational) personnel, namely, ship, marines and air. The chaplaincy team however shared worship and pastoral duties. Thirty one questions⁷ were asked of two hundred and eighty four Ship's Company, HMS OCEAN. Ninety

⁷ See Appendix A.

voluntary returns were made. The findings of their returns form the basis of what follows, although especial notice has been given to the questions asked, relating to religious background (baptised or confirmed), current church attachment, denominational preference and ecumenical outlook. What I hoped to show from the survey, was statistical support for my existential experiences recorded anecdotally in this work during operations. Would we find statistically that men and women on board HMS OCEAN were no longer denominationally driven and in fact applauded the advent of an ecumenical church when in true community? Indeed, would we find that men and women when deployed operationally, attend in better numbers within this new found church community, than within their domestic church situation at home? Did *religionless Christianity*, as a faith structure and community, truly exist at sea?

For ease of enquiry and analysis, the results of the study have been broken into two main groupings. Firstly, through a study of the whole group, we identify church background (baptised or confirmed) and then look specifically at statistics comparing those in permanent relationships and those not, to these overall statistics.⁸ This is then set alongside questions which examine the ecumenical outlook of

⁸ The study has divided the respondents into two groupings. Those in permanent relationships, fifty one out of ninety, and those not. This indicates the occasions when the church has had the opportunity to affect people through the rites of passage of marriage and baptism of children. It is also a rough guide to age of respondents, the permanents being an average five years older than the non permanents. Within these two groupings we note those baptised (seventy seven out of ninety), confirmed (twenty seven) and those married/children baptised in church, and those not, again to look at the churches overall influence and thus effect upon the respondents.

the individuals surveyed, as regards the church in the navy.

Out of the total of ninety returns⁹, the survey discovered that seventy seven persons were baptised and twenty seven confirmed. Only fourteen persons claimed to have regular contact with a civilian church. Thirty seven persons from the survey attend an ecumenical church service at sea, with seven of the fourteen attendees of a civilian church not being attendees at sea. Interestingly, the seven in this latter group, who will only attend ashore, are Roman Catholics and we shall discuss this statistic later. Twelve of the fourteen attendees of a civilian church service are either married or in a permanent relationship (again this statistic will be further examined later). All these so called 'permanents' have either been married in a church (or plan to be), and have had their children (if they have any) subsequently baptised.

What do these results suggest? Firstly, seventy seven out of ninety have been baptised which shows that the vast majority were brought up in at least a nominal Christian home. Indeed, the figure of twenty seven subsequently confirmed, nearly one third of the total number questioned, shows a good follow up rate of the church from baptism onto confirmation. Fourteen

⁹ A note of caution over these statistics must be borne in mind here. Out of two hundred and eighty four questionnaires, which I asked the ship's company to respond to on a voluntary basis, only ninety were returned. Two groups of respondents emerged, those who were keen on the church and wanted to help my study personally, and groups from mess decks where the mess deck supervisor was keen to get all his men or women to respond. So from some quarters there was a high response and from others none at all. My conclusion would be to suggest that the respondents would naturally be those on the ship who were more in favour of the church than against and so we need to modify down any findings for a broader picture remembering the two hundred and eighty four ranks on board and not just the ninety respondents.

out of twenty seven persons confirmed still have contact with a civilian church. Thirty seven attend the ecumenical service at sea. A total of forty four out of ninety persons attend church services either at home or at sea. Thus, nearly fifty per cent of our respondents still have a living church connection, seemingly a high statistic for our secular era. We shall compare these statistics from HMS OCEAN, with wider church figures later.

What is especially encouraging for chaplaincy from these figures, is that thirty seven persons attend the ecumenical church at sea, with only thirteen being confirmed ranks. As mentioned previously, seven confirmands do not attend the church service at sea due to their Roman Catholicism. This is partly due to the fact that until recently all church services at sea were Anglican, although all were invited. This was the old school ecumenism. These services in recent history have been Eucharistic and thus Roman Catholics felt excluded. The new system, which follows an order of service with a liturgy of the Word for all and then a Eucharist for Reformed Christians, with the reserved sacrament distributed to Roman Catholics at the same time (by the nominated lay Roman Catholic Eucharistic Minister) has just begun. It is vice versa if the Ship's Chaplain is a Roman Catholic. Indeed the pattern is still as yet to be made uniform throughout the Fleet. Understandably then, Roman Catholics have mostly felt (and especially so if they were devout) that the service at sea was not for them.

As regards confirmation as a rite of passage to feed the church at sea, it has largely failed. Fourteen confirmed ranks (out of twenty seven) surveyed still attend their civilian church. Ten attend exclusively at sea and three attend both services. Seven only attend at their civilian church and seven attend neither. Out of twenty seven confirmed ranks, thirteen attend at sea and fourteen do not. Confirmation is thus both good and bad as far as feeding attendance at the church service at sea. In some ways, as we have seen with the Roman Catholics, confirmation or denominationalism, can act against all Christians meeting together at sea for Sunday worship. Sadly, seven confirmed respondents attend neither service on shore or sea.

Thus, our group of most churched Christians, the confirmed, provide a mixed response. In favour of the ecumenical service at sea, is the fact that ten confirmed ranks attend at sea and will not do so in a civilian church. Against this goes the response of the seven Roman Catholics. If however, the seven confirmed Roman Catholics started to attend an ecumenical sea service, the figures would be much more positive. Indeed, the sea service would be seen as a positive complement to the work of the civilian church. The figures would then read, twenty out of twenty seven confirmed ranks surveyed attending church, a much better statistic, fifty per cent thus coming back to church attendance exclusively through the ecumenical service at sea. This service can perhaps best be described then as a missionary tool for those who were churched and have fallen

away, provided the non attendance of confirmed and regular civilian church attending Roman Catholics, is dealt with. What then of the un-churched?

Twenty four persons surveyed out of thirty seven, who attend a church service at sea, had not been confirmed. Two of them have civilian church connections with the Church of Scotland and Free Churches. Twenty two persons thus attend a service at sea and have no church connection whatsoever. Sixty per cent of attendees at sea are new to the church. Those confirmed and adhering are thus in a minority.

Why would those who are least likely to support the church service at sea attend and be in the majority? To gain this answer we must further break down the groupings who attend church at sea. We have looked at the confirmation statistics, now we shall break the respondents into the groupings of those in permanent relationships and those not. It is interesting to note from the outset, that only two respondents from the group of those not in any form of permanent relationship, continue to have contact with their civilian church. A further six from this grouping attend only the church service at sea. Thus, only a total of eight persons out of thirty nine, not in permanent relationships, attend church at sea or on shore. A low statistic. We shall examine this finding later in the chapter. This leaves thirty one persons attending at sea who are within a permanent relationship. This is significant. Firstly, because we note that those in

permanent relationships are older than the other grouping and secondly, because all of them were either married in a church (or are planning to be) or have had their children baptised. Fifty out of fifty one persons surveyed, who are in a permanent relationship, were married or plan to be married in church and have or intend to have their children baptised.

Thirty one persons then, out of our total of thirty nine attendees of the service at sea belong to the grouping of those in permanent relationships. Additionally, twelve of this grouping attend a civilian church on shore and are confirmed. Nineteen however are not confirmed and do not attend civilian church. Thus, the more mature individual, in a permanent relationship, with children and connected to church through marriage and baptism, belongs to the largest grouping of those who attend the church service at sea (forty nine per cent). Thirty one per cent who attend at sea and on shore are confirmed and also belong to the permanent relationship grouping. Only five per cent attending at sea and shore are in no permanent relationship, with fifteen per cent in no permanent relationship and no civilian church connection, but attending at sea. Fifty per cent of those who attend church, do so only at sea and are in the permanent relationship grouping. Three to one attending the church at sea over the civilian church at home. From these figures then the church service at sea is a vital missionary tool to reach the churched who no longer attend. The statistics point to a great success for the ecumenical service at sea from within

the older grouping who are in permanent relationships.

The challenge for chaplaincy however, is with the younger grouping, namely those not in permanent relationships according to our survey. Twenty eight out of the total of thirty nine, non permanent relationship respondents are baptised, with ten confirmed. Only one of those confirmed attends the church service at sea. Sadly, only two respondents are currently attending a civilian church (Roman Catholic) and six more attend only the church service at sea. A total of eight persons from this grouping, of those in no permanent relationship, attend church at sea or on shore. It should be noted from the statistics (as compared to those in a permanent relationship), that there has been a large drop in church attendance from within the confirmed grouping who are in non permanent relationships. Only two out of ten confirmed attend church at all, one fifth (as against twenty out of twenty seven, seventy four per cent, amongst those in permanent relationships). Confirmation has not thus supplied (as yet) either the civilian church nor the church at sea with any significant numbers from the non permanent relationship group. These figures do however suggest that people who are confirmed, once they are in permanent relationships and thus are on average five years older than the non-permanents, do return to the church at sea or on land.

What are we to make of these findings? It is hardly surprising to discover that the younger members in the survey,

who belonged to the non permanent relationship group, attend least of all at the church services on sea and shore. The sea figures are however more attractive, with four times as many from this grouping attending church at sea, rather than on land. This is probably due to the easy and captive audience which a ship's company can be for an enthusiastic Chaplain. Close contact pastorally further feeds attendance and church becomes less alien to the younger grouping. Furthermore, the ecumenical service at sea is geared towards the un-churched and so it is perhaps less forbidding than attending church at home. There is obviously more sense of belonging in attending church at sea and thus it is generally an easier thing to do.¹⁰

The figures from those attending, in permanent relationships, do suggest however that as sailors settle down in life, get married in church and have their children baptised, they start attending church. Sixty per cent of those attending church from this grouping were attending only at sea and were unconfirmed. In some ways the service at sea is a bridge for these people to return to church. For the older and more senior person in the Royal Navy, the easier it seems to be, for them to attend church at sea. This is because there is less peer pressure on them not to attend church, from within their respective messes and indeed in some ways, with seniority, a greater responsibility is placed upon them to

¹⁰ Here our theme of the church at sea being *their* church is shown, whereas a denominational church shore side may have no sense of belonging to the sailors. Furthermore, the ship's company will truly know their Chaplain in a way the young in civilian society are unlikely to. For both belong to the one ship's company. The Chaplain, truly knowing his people should then produce worship geared towards their needs which should prove both attractive and fulfilling.

lead the younger men and women into attending church through their own attendance. Our statistics also showed that this grouping has had additional contact with the church through their marriage ceremonies and children's baptisms and so they have more of a duty to support the church at sea. Their age and stage in life also plays a significant part in their decision to attend church.

It is now to the general attitudes towards church and chaplaincy, from our survey, to which we shall now turn. We do so in order to try and understand, where as a church and a chaplaincy, we stand with people and what they think of us. Is denominationalism relevant anymore or is an ecumenical church model, a *religionless Christianity*, more appropriate? From the survey, only one person thought that the denomination of the Chaplain mattered. This person is a Roman Catholic whom we noted earlier, will not attend the ecumenical service at sea. Denominational matters are therefore relevant for this person. However, we must also pay some attention to the opposite argument, as regards the ecumenical service at sea. Here follows responses made, which summarise the general view, regarding the respondents enjoyment of the ecumenical service at sea, "The ecumenical service at sea is a definite plus and needs more exposure shore side...In ships we consider ourselves to be 'all of one company', I do not have a problem in 'doing' church the same way...Generally any service at sea is fine, its what the individual believes that matters."

Why should people be more open towards the ecumenical services at sea of an any denominational Chaplain? Interestingly and perhaps what lies at the heart of the matter, twenty eight people surveyed stated that they had used the pastoral services of a Chaplain, nearly one third of the total. A selection of comments on this matter are as follows, they said, "The Chaplain is there to help you, someone to speak to, a confidante, someone who offers advice without taking sides...He is someone who takes church services and is someone I would speak to about things I could not tell anyone else... He is not wholly Naval and is someone who supports the spiritual well being of our community, someone who prays on our behalf to God." Only four persons surveyed believed that there was no longer a need for the Naval Chaplaincy Service in the new millennium.

Here I think we must raise again the issue of 'being all of one company' at sea. To think that any ranks may feel unwelcome at a ship's service because of their denomination must be grasped, for the only respondents who had difficulty with the ecumenical, all of one company service, were the aforementioned Roman Catholics. Indeed, we must remember that sixty per cent of those who attend the service at sea attend only these services and are not denominationally driven by attending a church shore side. Indeed, from the responses made, these individuals enjoy the ecumenical service at sea and encourage its use shore side, perhaps this might even help in attracting them back to a civilian church?

To conclude our section on the HMS OCEAN religious attitude survey we must recognise certain constraining factors before leaping to recommendations. Firstly, the survey was voluntary and only ninety out of two hundred and eighty four ship's company responded. As I mentioned earlier, the chances are that this would mean answers given more in favour than against chaplaincy and the church. Undoubtedly, the size of the survey must also be recognised for what it is. That said, this was a survey taken at the 'coal face' following a difficult humanitarian operation in Central America. Three quarters of those surveyed felt they did understand what chaplaincy was about during this trip and so we must recognise their opinions. What is most noticeable was that the rites of passage of the church fed church attendance at sea only when people of a certain age and in permanent relationships were concerned. Indeed, confirmation for seven Roman Catholics counted against church attendance at sea and for those in non permanent relationships, attendance at sea and on shore was poor.

Eighty six per cent of the people surveyed were baptised and a third confirmed, thus virtually all were at least nominally Christian. Ninety per cent remained the same denomination as their parents. Ninety five per cent believed that there was a role for the Naval Chaplaincy Service for the new millennium, with thirty one per cent having used the service pastorally. Only one person was concerned about the denomination of the Chaplain and ninety one per cent supported the ecumenical

service at sea. Forty three per cent of those surveyed attended the church service at sea with sixty per cent of these attendees only attending the sea service. For HMS OCEAN, the sea service brought many people back into a church service, especially if they were within a permanent relationship.

The sense of 'belonging to all of one company' is an important one. Here we see people recognising that they are existing in community. There is indeed in a warship a mutual responsibility towards one another. It is hardly surprising then that the church services at sea should be applauded and supported for its inclusiveness in the survey. Religiosity or devout denominationalism prevented some people from attending the ecumenical service. Adjustments must be made throughout the Fleet to ensure all feel welcome. Loyalty however, belongs ultimately at sea, to your ship and your ship mates and for most, this supersedes distant denominational ties. It is with this thought, of a ship as a community, bound loyally towards one another for survival, that one discovers a *religionless Christianity* emerging, where a genuine ecumenical Christian community grows and worships together, in the spirit of trust and respect through commonality. It does so by being forged out of genuine community. It is with these thoughts in mind, coupled to my own experiences within 3 Commando Brigade, that we move onto a comparison of the HMS OCEAN survey with some facts and figures from a wider British context.

Grace Davie, in her book, *Religion in Britain, since 1945*,¹¹ offers us a good foil by which to judge the relative merits of the HMS OCEAN survey. The sub heading to her book, *Believing without Belonging*, in many ways sums up much of what we have seen in terms of support for the Naval Chaplaincy Service, by Sailors and Marines, without necessarily attending the church services. She writes, "...most people in this country - whatever their denominational allegiance - express their religious sentiments by staying away from, rather than going to, their places of worship. On the other hand, relatively few British people have opted out of religion altogether: out and out atheists are rare."¹² She sums up the book's thesis by saying, "Within this book, one particular theme predominates. It concerns the increasingly evident mismatch between statistics relating to religious practice and those which indicate levels of religious belief."¹³

Davie's position is backed up by strong statistics from the European Values Study (EVS) data which she quotes throughout the book. The study data breaks those surveyed into two types, one group who are concerned with feelings, experience and more numinous religious beliefs and those who stand within religious orthodoxy, ritual participation and have an institutional attachment. The first group can be described as believers who do not belong to a church community, the second group as those who attend church. An important point to note

¹¹ See Davie G, *Religion in Britain since 1945*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1997.

¹² *ibid* p2.

¹³ *ibid* p4.

with Davie's findings is that she claims that the un-churched in Britain can no longer be described as secular. She writes, "Complacency in the 1950's gave way to a radicalism dominated by the values of the secular world. But this in turn led, eventually, to a renewed emphasis on the sacred, sometimes in unconventional forms, from whose preoccupations the secular world begins increasingly to borrow. In some respects the wheel has indeed turned full circle, but it would be foolish to imagine that it is possible to recapture the past. For one underlying trend remains throughout the post war period: that is, the failure of the mainline (that is, most Christian) religious organizations to maintain *regular* contact with the majority of people in the country..." ¹⁴

The concept of regular contact as Davie highlighted is an important one for it may explain the difference in statistics of church attendance between the civilian and the Naval church at sea. From Davie's EVS data we see 14.4 per cent membership of church throughout Britain. This can be sub divided into roughly three equal groupings, Anglican, Roman Catholic and the Free Churches (including the national and established Church of Scotland). In the Anglican case however, from confirmed members figure of 1.8 million¹⁵, it jumps to 26.7 million baptised in an Anglican Church. Davies argues from these figures that in England there is a latent belief in Christianity but one which does not become fulfilled in church

¹⁴ *ibid* p6.

¹⁵ See *ibid* p46ff.

attendance or membership. In other words there is an extension of one's nationality in being Anglican.

The Roman Catholic position in 1995 was 2 million confirmed members doubling to 5.6 million baptised. The Roman Catholic Christians in Britain, Davie argues, being largely an immigrant denominational group are thus religiously a separate sociological grouping from Anglicans (or indeed Presbyterians in Scotland). Because of this distinct cultural background, arising out of a close geographical demography, the Roman Catholic figures differ greatly from the Anglican ones. Thus the difference between membership and baptised is only two fold rather than twelve fold for the Roman Catholics against the Anglicans. Indeed the geographical and cultural case for Roman Catholics being in a living community which attends its church can be seen in the number of congregations in the country. There were only four thousand Roman Catholic congregations in 1992, against eighteen thousand Anglican and twenty one thousand Free Church. Thus demographically Roman Catholics live more closely together than the Anglicans, or indeed Presbyterians in Scotland. Coupled onto these factors is the Irish nationalist case whereby the identity of these immigrant families, now two generations removed from the original incomers to Britain, is maintained through attendance at a Roman Catholic Church.

Davie argues likewise for other Free Church denominations within the Afro-Caribbean culture where there is both a shared

racial and demographic background. Methodism, especially in the South West can be seen, although to a lesser extent than those mentioned before, to fall into this category. Indeed, Davie argues that Scots Presbyterianism across the whole of Scotland, can be understood as a church which upholds national identity, if only because it is not the same as England's religious identity, namely Anglicanism.

All these points add up to one thing for Davie, which is that the religious identity of Britain is made up of a multi various grouping based around ethnic and demographic settings. But despite all these supposed differences Davie concludes that, "The bare bones of this summary of church membership are easily conveyed. Relatively few British people either belong to a church or attend religious services with any regularity, and those among the indigenous population that do either these things divide their attentions pretty evenly between the Anglican, Roman Catholic and free church categories, with the latter, relatively speaking, gaining in popularity (assuming that the house churches and Afro-Caribbean groups are included). And given this state of affairs, it could be argued, surely that the religiously active - of whatever Christian denomination - have more in common with each other than with the majority of the population."¹⁶

Two points should be examined from Davie's work here, in comparison with the HMS OCEAN survey. Firstly, the ethnic or

¹⁶ *ibid* p69.

cultural background of people and the demography of where they live. It was suggested earlier that the higher statistics for church attendance on HMS OCEAN was due to the 'all of one company' approach and mentality at sea. Here, the backgrounds of the Sailors and Marines becomes superseded with a new cultural, demographic and indeed racial identity. This explains why all but one of the respondents were happy with a Chaplain of any denomination. This was because he or she were Naval chaplains and was at sea with them. In other words they also belonged to the Naval community, wore the same cap badge and shared the same risks. As we have noted previously within the Royal Marines community, the differences of the past are replaced with a new shared identity¹⁷.

So the research from HMS OCEAN found that over ninety per cent of respondents favoured the ecumenical, 'all of one company' service at sea. It is thus proven here what Davie found, namely that the different Christian denominations have more in common with one another than with anyone else when they come together as one community. The Naval system naturally affords people the opportunity to see that for themselves. The problem for the Christian denominations throughout Britain is thus that they either do not get that opportunity to live together in community, because of demographic or cultural difficulties, or they, quite simply, do not want to mix or be

¹⁷ This explains to me the reason for the importance of the old comrades associations and why necessarily they meet regularly. It is only when they meet up that that sense of belonging is felt once more and many have expressed to me a sense of alienation from oneself when they leave the service. This is overcome with meetings and more often than not religious services of remembrance which would include and remember fallen comrades.

seen to be one community. When ones own national identity is reflected through your denominational loyalty, changing your denomination means much more than simply going to a different church.

This takes us onto our second point when comparing the two studies. Quite clearly the most disappointing statistic to come out from the HMS OCEAN findings was the fact that seven confirmed Roman Catholics would not attend the ecumenical service at sea. With Davie showing a greater ethnic and demographic understanding to Roman Catholicism, we can see that not only are we asking these Roman Catholics to attend a church service which has been Eucharistic and Anglican, but also in another way we are asking them to attend a service which they identify with being English. Most likely these Roman Catholics will come from a national identity tied generationally to Ireland. We in chaplaincy must also be careful, when leading ecumenical services, to be aware of national identity issues within worship. Ecumenical thus also means multi national and multi ethnic.

Davie also looked closely at the religious commitment of people in Britain. Here she noticed that between the ages 18 - 24 years, thirty nine per cent of the population have a low commitment. Between 25 - 44 years the low commitment category drops to twenty four per cent¹⁸. The statistics show that as the population gets older the more committed they become to

¹⁸ See *ibid* p80.

church. The HMS OCEAN survey, which compared those in permanent relationship, or not, to highlight rites of passage contact with the church showed similar results. That said, the ecumenical sea service attracted thirty nine out of ninety respondents, twenty two exclusively.

Thus, forty three per cent of those surveyed could be considered as being at least moderately committed to church. These figures equate to the findings of EVS for the age group 45 - 64 years in the British population. The mixture of shared cultural and geographical identity at sea (they all live together, united as Brits), seems thus to work for church commitment amongst the young.

The last point which I would like to discuss with reference to the work of Davie, regards the form of worship which one would offer at sea. The bare bones are, as previously mentioned, a liturgy of the Word, followed by a eucharistic service, with the reserved sacrament made available through an appointed lay person, for Roman Catholics. The communion service may indeed take place at a separate time and place from the service of the Word depending on circumstances. What the HMS OCEAN survey proved was that over ninety per cent of the respondents were happy with a service conducted by a Chaplain of any denomination. Most surveyed had no strong liturgical background and knowledge, so this result is no surprise.

What Davie pinpoints in her research is that the post modern person, not secular man as Bonhoeffer would have it, views

church attendance, as a leisure activity. As a leisure activity, church is thus in competition with all other leisure activities. This is where the ecumenical service at sea has a strong advantage. At sea, bar those on operational duties, the Sunday Sea Routine, as it is called, stops always for church. There is no longer compulsory attendance but most at least are given the opportunity to attend. Furthermore, there are fewer competing leisure activities at sea to compete against church attendance, obviously including family distractions.

What the service at sea can offer however is a sacred moment and place within a busy operational climate. A time to recognise factors beyond oneself and seek healing. Furthermore, without the restrictions of set liturgies, the Chaplain can make the liturgy fit the occasion and audience. The audience will return, in this post modern¹⁹ world if they have enjoyed the service and felt it all a worthwhile leisure activity. For the post modern young Sailor and Marine, the sense of attendance out of duty has gone (we have seen this from the very poor attendance figures amongst those in non permanent relationships), to be replaced with a grouping looking to be entertained, in the broadest sense.

¹⁹ I use the term *post modern* here following Davie's thought p80ff. Her definition is a narrow one but helpful for our discussion. Firstly, she sees the time period post World War 2 as being a secular and scientific age. A time when science held the answers, thus beliefs and hopes of the Western world. Belief in God and the Church dropped away. The period of the eighties onwards brought in a time of *post modernity*, reflected in a new interest in spiritual issues, exemplified by the new age movement. This *post modern* time allows a place for science but does not believe that it holds all the answers. Spiritual answers to life will be sought out by the *post modern* person along with scientific ones. God is thus no longer dead as a belief system and there is thus room for the church to be a positive contributor in presenting God to a *post modern* society. To set in context for our debate then, the *post modern* i

On HMS OCEAN for example, the organist was a talented cabaret singer and many of the younger ones attended simply to hear Ronnie sing. The style of worship, when considering attracting new members is thus vital. In the next chapter, we will hear of Studdert Kennedy singing at his piano to the troops in Rouen station. He is an example set to us today of the expert and entertaining (in the broadest sense) Padre to the un-churched. Church must be as attractive for people, as other competing leisure options in today's world, both in the Navy or outside it. At least for chaplaincy we have the advantage of the geographical and cultural unity with our people. There is community.

III. CONCLUSION

I believe that certain key themes have emerged out of my own personal experiences as an operational Chaplain in the last decade. These findings have been further backed up by the results from the study on religious attitudes on board HMS OCEAN, alongside the necessary comparison with the research of Davie. What we have found is that 'being all of one company' is an essential ingredient which allows people to come together in ways which as civilians they may not normally do. The stronger the sense of togetherness, in community, the more likely divisions of the past will be overcome. Thus would denominational differences, which often merely reflect cultural and/or geographical differences be overcome. This would be especially true within a service environment where

men and women come together from all backgrounds and walks of life and are moulded through basic training into a fighting whole. This is especially true of all those serving within the Commando Brigade who share in the toughest, and thus most forming infantry training.

Coupled onto these factors, is the fact that service people are constantly being placed in a position of mutual responsibility through serving together at sea or within a fighting unit. It is here that one sees a new type of person emerging. This person, through time served, becomes culturally different from the person that he was. Even within family life things have changed, for most of these service people and their families become geographically dislocated from their cultural roots through living in service housing. Furthermore, in many of these areas they contain a large majority of people from their new service society. Cultural and ethnic loyalties thus gradually change. As these notions of belonging and mutuality increase (especially when at war) to the ship or unit, so the old denominational ties (if there were any before) drop away completely. They want to worship in their new cultural environment now. A genuine form of *religionless Christianity* emerges, which becomes a truly ecumenical church for that community.

The Chaplain fits right into the centre of this cultural phenomenon, for he is the same as every one else, especially once blooded operationally. Like the others, his old

denominational ties seem less important than before and as he further experiences the wider world on operations, many of the issues that once so concerned him seem less relevant.

Operationally he works with chaplains of other denominations, of whom before he probably had a narrow and ignorant opinion, in terms of their denomination and beliefs. That has now changed, for he now 'knows' them well and has become dependent on their help, as they are of his. They are forced into this situation of dependency through the difficult situations that they face on operations. They learn together to enjoy their different backgrounds, and realise that differences merely reflect from whence they have come. They accept that since all are equally called by God to ministry and priesthood within the operational service, all must be treated as being ones sent by Him. They now all belong to the same family, this church with no institutional name, no matter what the sending churches might officially state. Father Simon Beveridge, my Anglo Catholic friend, and I, are presbyters now of that same catholic church.

Here we are entering a place that I believe Bonhoeffer meant, when he spoke of *religionless Christianity* and we will further research the legitimacy of this claim in chapter three. Just as the chaplains would all recognise their oneness in Christ when deployed, so too would the men and women of the ship's company or unit, recognise in their Chaplain, a person who had something to offer them. They would come to think this way because they would truly 'know' their Chaplain. They would

speak the same language through shared experience. They would thus feel comfortable, despite their un-churched background to approach and use their Padre's services, in a manner largely unachievable in civilian society within their age group. Contact had been made to that group which Davie revealed (between 18-24 years) had a very low commitment to the church. Our statistics from the HMS OCEAN study revealed that our attendance at sea equated to the age group results of civilian church attendance, from the 45-64 year old grouping of Davie's research. To achieve similar results, for our younger community's church attendance statistics, to those of the older grouping, is I believe no mean feat! It may also offer us some useful thoughts in our last chapter when looking at wider mission of the church in civilian society, especially to the younger age group. Hopefully then, the statistics have shown support for what we have suggested anecdotally throughout this chapter. Namely, that where you have true community on operations, you find a naturally ecumenical Christian community, served by a genuinely catholic chaplaincy team, forged out of an environment where the domestic, institutional church does not truly go or belong. With such thoughts in mind we now turn our attention to the work of the Great War chaplains and in particular to the life and writings of Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy.

Chapter Two: God's Voice in the Trenches

I. BACKGROUND

I.1 The Church, Chaplaincy and the First World War

Towards the end of the 19th century attendances in the Church of England started to drop considerably. The traditional ties between parish church and the working man had gone with the building of the new towns. No longer did many necessarily feel a part of the church structure. Times had changed.

During the mid-nineteenth century however, the Church of England was doing reasonably well, or so it was thought. The Oxford Movement in particular, produced a dynamism within the church which perhaps has never since been equalled. Aware of past failings, the church moved forward in areas of education and social justice. It had to, for in 1851, figures of church attendance revealed some frightening statistics. Marsh writes, "The findings were a jolting disappointment for the established Church; and because of the subsequent denominational controversy, no such count was made under government auspices again in the nineteenth century. The census proved statistically what the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had implied theoretically: that the Church of England's right to continued recognition as the national Church was shaky. Of the 7,261,032 who attended one or more religious services, 3,773,474 or little more than half went to

Anglican churches...When denominational quarrelling subsided, however, this figure for more or less deliberate absentees seemed a greater cause for alarm than the 3,487,558 attendants at non-Anglican services. Perhaps England was not even a Christian let alone an Anglican country. Certainly no denomination had won much support among the lower classes of the cities, which were well on their way to being the home of the majority of Englishmen." ²¹

Geographical and familial ties of loyalty had been broken, for many permanently. The church was required to act and so it did, especially through people such as Archbishop Tait, who broke with convention and started preaching in the open air. New churches were built to respond to the movement of the population.

Of this time, Owen Chadwick concluded, "Until the last fifteen years of the century, the churches succeeded marvellously in their endeavours to keep pace with the rising population. After 1886 however, though the leaders of most churches had just as powerful a feeling of advance, the figures show that the churches failed markedly to keep pace with the rise of people; and more, that in towns where the population was still rising, the number of attendants at church began to decline. As the chaplains were later to discover, the religion of the average private soldier had been formed in the Sunday and day schools, but not by adult worship in church. Thus, the war

²¹ Marsh PT, *The Victorian Church in Decline*, Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1969. p6.

revealed the extent of the alienation of the majority of the English male population from the life and practice of the Churches. The war revealed it, deepened it, but it was already there prior to it." ²²

Marsh writes, "The Church of England can be likened, during its quest in the middle half of the nineteenth century to reassert, extend and then maintain its national influence, to another Victorian institution, the Alpine climber. Between 1828 and 1833 part of the ground under the Church's feet fell away, but with resourceful determination it lifted itself safely up to a stretch of high terrain. The walking here was never secure; there were always crevices in sight; but for a while they served only to challenge the exhilarated walker to further efforts. However, the crevices widened. Soon after Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, ideas capable of undermining commonly held Christian beliefs became popular debating topics. In 1862 the committee of the Council on Education insisted, though as yet ineffectual, that Church schools receiving a government grant must allow pupils, if their parents so wished, to withdraw from the classroom when religious instruction was given." ²³

The Edwardian period, like the Victorian era, was also a time of great change. Not only in terms of population movement and church attendance, but in many other areas also. There was

²² Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p6.

²³ Marsh PT, *The Victorian Church in Decline*, Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1969. p8.

the Boer War from 1899-1902, which caused division in the churches, especially when 5,000 non-conformist ministers signed a manifesto against the war. Others however did not share this view and Bishop BF Wescott believed that imperialism embodied the principles of brotherhood and service. Such would be the reaction to the fast approaching Great War.

In 1906 the Liberals would introduce sweeping changes to social reforms, there would be great Trade Union unrest between 1911/12 and suffragette demonstrations would begin and increase. The 1911 Parliament Act renewed conflict in Ireland threatening civil war in 1914 and Britain became a closer ally to Russia and France with repercussions to follow.

On 4th August 1914 such a repercussion would be felt. Britain would declare war on Germany and her Allies and for the first time in a century the whole nation would become involved. Many rejoiced at the thought of the war. Perhaps this is a normal human reaction to the thought of a fight when it does not, at least initially seem to involve you personally. Some however, such as Wilfred Owen, despaired of the war's approach although in a different way than he would express in his later war poems. He wrote, "While it is true that the guns will effect a little useful weeding, I am furious with chagrin to think that the minds which were to have excelled the civilization of ten thousand years, are being annihilated - and bodies, the products of aeons of Natural Selection, melted

down to pay for political status." ²⁴

Most expressed thought on the war, good or bad, inevitably came from the chattering classes, for the working man saw the conflict in many ways as a means of escape. Wilkinson describes it thus: "...enlistment offered not only a way of serving his country but also an alternative to a humdrum job or unemployment." ²⁵ Few truly spoke out against the war. The socialist politician Kier Hardie called for an international strike of all workers, but as he concluded, "We simply do not count." ²⁶ Morally, the invasion of Belgium was seen as a weak country being invaded by a big bully and the correct Christian response was to move to the defence of the weaker side.

By the time of outbreak then, most of the Bishops of the Church of England followed the national reaction and supported the war. Conscription arrived in May 1916, and again despite heavy casualties, including the disaster of Gallipoli, the church supported the rallying call to arms, including Studdert Kennedy whom we shall look at in detail later. Wilkinson describes the view as such; "Conscription created a new sense of corporate purpose, opened more and more spheres of employment to women, and gave one in three of the adult population an experience of the armed services, and in many cases participation in the horrors of the trenches." ²⁷

²⁴ Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p18.

²⁵ *ibid* p21.

²⁶ *ibid* p28.

²⁷ *ibid* p31.

Pulpits and church magazines enhanced the cause and many clergy further deepened their relationships with their local regiments in light of mass enlistment. Here the connection between the Church of England and the State became apparent. Hensley Henson, then Bishop of Durham stated that he "...felt deeply that the Church of England was called to be the Church of the nation" ²⁸(excepting of course the situation in Scotland, although some Anglicans at times over-looked this matter).

That said, and despite the obvious support for the war by the Church of England, the support they offered would remain mainly clerical and not as combatants. By 1917 nearly every cleric in the land was doing some form of national service. Rather surprisingly then, on April 9 1918, following the successful German offensive, clergy were allowed to conscript as combatants. This was quickly changed however due to Roman Catholic opposition in Ireland. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland endorsed priests serving within the British Army because Roman Catholics were serving therein and would require the services of a Catholic priest. By being seen to be combatants, priests they thought would be seen to be endorsing the British cause, rather than the Catholic one which was inextricably tied up with a nationalist and hence anti-British agenda. Priests could thus only work within the British Army,

²⁸ ibid p34.

if they remained solely priests.

In France the situation was quite different. Wilkinson tells us, "In France most of the clergy conscripted served as combatants. Of the 32,699, 4,618 were killed, and large numbers were decorated or commended for bravery. The courage of the combatant clergy did much to moderate anti-clericalism. A truce was declared during the war between most anti-clericals and the Church, a 'Union Sacree'...Whatever the value to Church and nation rendered by the combatant clergy, it is clear their service did little to ameliorate that alienation of the French working class from Church and clergy so painfully experienced by the French worker-priests who accompanied the conscripted working men to Germany during the second world war." ²⁹

It may seem strange to us that such a high number of French clergy enlisted. One must remember, however, that for Britain and our Allies, this was a war fought once again on foreign soil, a war similar to that fought by Marlborough at Blenheim and Wellington at Waterloo. Like these other encounters, this was also a coalition war, with the French being the main players. At no time were the British commanders in Supreme Command, a point that is often forgotten. The British would play second fiddle to the French throughout, remembering it was their country which we were being asked to help defend

²⁹ ibid p42.

small parts of, along with a chunk of Belgium. The war to the French and the Belgians was thus a more personal one than to the British. Quite naturally, the churches in the three countries would understand the war in different measures also. The French would always see it as a war of personal liberation whereas the British would speak of moral imperatives.

John Terraine highlights this point in his essay 'British Leadership in the First World War.' He writes, "This was a coalition war, and the senior partner of the coalition in the West was France; the main front of the war was where the main body of the main enemy was - in France. Until July 1916 the main body of the main enemy on the main front was engaged by the French, and the casualty figures reflect this: - by December 1915, French casualties amounted to just under two million; British casualties (including Gallipoli and other sideshows) were just over half a million. The lengths of front held also reflect the weight of the effort: at the end of 1914 the BEF held 24 miles out of about 450; at the end of 1915, about 40 miles. I think these figures make it quite obvious who was going to be in control of strategy - clearly the French High Command (just as naval affairs were under the control of the British Admiralty, for the same reason)." ³⁰

It is interesting then to hear the views of the French themselves on the war. One of their chaplains, Father Felix

³⁰ Terraine J, *Leadership and War*, The Western Front Association. 1998. p51.

Klein, wrote a diary of his experiences between August 1914 and January 1915. He wrote, "Civilized peoples, and it is to their credit, so little love war for war's sake, that the greatest crime of which they accuse Germany is of having unchained it." ³¹ Quite clearly Germany was held to be the evil aggressor in the minds of the French and Belgians, to whom Klein dedicated his diary. The sense of loss and suffering of the French and Belgians can often be overlooked by British thought on the war, concentrating inevitably upon themselves. I quote here from a letter sent by a French woman to the Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg.

"Highness,

It is an unfortunate French woman and her old parents, refugees here for the past seven months, who implore humbly Your High support to obtain from the German Authorities the repatriation for which they have registered themselves ever since their arrival in Luxembourg. Absolutely ruined by the catastrophe which is bloodying the entire world, after having two properties entirely destroyed, after having for the past three years, suffered everything which, without dying it is possible to undergo, mortal anguish, miseries, and, can I say, hunger, we were forced last February, to abandon in haste a third house, our last shelter, to flee the dangers of death which, each day was brought by aircraft...Time is passing and our funds

³¹ Klein F, *The Diary of a French Army Chaplain*, Andrew Melrose Ltd. 1915. p10.

are ended. And still my poor mother, exhausted by such miseries and whose health has given real alarms, should have and needs a comforting atmosphere; my father is, also, very weak and it is not without terror that I think of the winter which is already approaching. Apart from that, separated for the last four years from a beloved husband, to whom go all my thoughts, with such crushing of the heart I see the hours become days, the days become months, and the months become years..." ³²

Perhaps then, such a situation explains how the clerical response in France was one less theologically based and more set upon preservation of one's own nation state and its people when invaded! This quite clearly was not the case for the British, despite their losses, although the sense of revulsion throughout the country following Germany's illegal attack on the Belgians, and their subsequent treatment of Belgian civilians, stoked some fires of resentment.

As mentioned however, some clergy from Britain did indeed enlist, not as chaplains but as combatants. Robert Callaway was one such priest, who first enlisted as a Chaplain and then unhappy with his role joined as a regular officer. In September 1916, he was killed on the Somme. In a letter to his wife, just prior to his death, he described a lecture he heard with his men, on the use of the bayonet.

³² Heal D, *Stand Tol: The Journal of the Western Association*, Number 54, 1999. p26.

He wrote, "...to me the interest of the lecture lay not so much in the lecture itself as in what the lecture stood for - the entire conversion of our whole attitude of mind as a nation. For it was instruction as to how best *kill* (with a bayonet), and every possible device that had been found by experience useful to enable a man to kill as many Germans as possible was taught. As one writes it down it sounds the most hideous brutality and yet yesterday I don't suppose there was an officer or man present who did not agree that if the war is to be won we must fight to kill. Personally I still shudder at the idea of sticking six inches of cold steel into another man's body or having his steel stuck into my body, but I shudder merely with the natural instinct of revulsion, which is common to at least all educated people. I don't shudder because I think it any more wrong of me as a priest. I have never for a single moment regretted becoming a combatant. In one way I can say with St. Paul, 'I glory in the things which concern my own infirmities.' I am proud of just those very things which other people think must be such a bore for me, e.g., coming down in rank (as a chaplain he had been a captain), being under the orders of boys of eighteen, having to trudge along on foot, etc., and for that reason I rejoiced when I gave up the Lewis Gun job, though everybody thought me a fool to do so." ³³

Father Hubert Northcott, a member of the Mirfield Fathers and later to become a well known spiritual director, with

³³ Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p43.

permission from his Bishop, enlisted as a private in the army in early 1918. He wrote of his reasons, "The Christian soldier has to be a Christian under almost impossible conditions: at least he has to revise his whole moral outlook....I have felt for myself that strange sense of being in a new world where old standards no longer apply...Going to church brings back other atmospheres, and one longs to be at the altar oneself. I feel in my wrong place. On the other hand, I do feel more and more that my present position gives me the opportunity of a very valuable experience. It seems to me worth while that one of us, especially an unimportant one, should be having it, if only the whole Community can in some way share it, though it means that one has to forgo his own functions for the time...I find one can't lay aside one's priesthood by donning khaki - I mean, I find it a fact as well as a theory. One can't get away from the sense of responsibility for those with whom one is brought into contact. Always there is a feeling of Our Lord trying to reach them, and to reach them through oneself - and one seems to fail Him every time...Perhaps opportunities will come. At present I have done nothing. I've chiefly been trying to find my own feet. Nor do I see how I'm to begin. However, I'm learning to love the lads here, and that is one essential for any effective work." ³⁴

Northcott, after his initial training, eventually ended up

³⁴ *ibid.*

working as a stretcher bearer, work which he was happy to do. He rarely met a Chaplain, which was a common complaint during the war (indeed it still is today!). Once, in the thick of it at the front, he wrote, "I am tremendously happy at the thought of being right in it." ³⁵

At home, the church continued to support the war effort, even sending some Bishops to the United States in order to persuade the Americans to support Britain more strongly. In the autumn of 1916, the Church of England started a movement called the National Mission of Repentance and Hope. Wilkinson describes it as "...an attempt by the Church of England to respond to the spiritual needs of the nation in wartime; an attempt to discharge its sense of vocation to act as the Christian conscience of the nation..." ³⁶

William Temple, later to become Archbishop of Canterbury, was a central figure in this new movement. The missionary work of the church would be a central tenet and all priests in England attended at least one of the five retreats to receive exposure to these thoughts. It is here that we meet for the first time the figure of Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy. 'Woodbine Willie' as his troops called him, would be responsible for the mission for the whole of France. Wilkinson tells us that, "For ten days he preached three times a day to audiences ranging from 500 to 1,500...Studdert Kennedy told the troops 'I see *John Bull* says you're all saints, well all I can say

³⁵ *ibid* p45.

³⁶ *ibid* p70.

is, 'eyes right' and look at your neighbour.' Kennedy would later turn this sermon into his first dialect verse (Kipling style) entitled 'A Sermon in a Billet'." ³⁷

The mission was carried to the troops by other famous men such as Father Keble Talbot, Douglas Dounes and Bishop Winnington-Ingram. The latter concluded however that, "I wanted to reach the ordinary man in the street, whereas I am afraid the mission only reached, in the main those who were already Church people." ³⁸

It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect upon these ordinary people and hear their thoughts on religion within the forces at this time. Captain JC Dunn, edited and contributed to the now famous diary of the war in *The War the Infantry Knew 1914-1919*. Serving throughout as a doctor and mostly with the 2nd Battalion Welch Fusiliers, Dunn captures the war from the point of view of the men. What is noticeable when reading the diary is the lack of mention of the church, chaplaincy, or indeed religion, despite his obvious close contact with chaplains throughout the war as a doctor. The absence is intriguing in itself, however the honesty of the account is valuable.

The Padre for the men, seems to be a man whom they like best when he is doing something they view as valuable. Church

³⁷ *ibid* p74.

³⁸ *ibid* p75.

parades hold no importance for *Tommy*, in fact quite the opposite, as can be seen from the following account of a day in the life of the battalion from March, 1915. "Division states that the First Army's losses were 300 officers and 11,000 men: estimates German losses as at least 22,000 - and they were defending! Church parade was in an upper hall of a school at L'Armee. The padre preached about his 'terrible experience' in having to talk to some men who had been condemned to be shot. Corporal Hughes, of C Company, a stout little fellow on patrol, remarked to a friend as he was leaving the hall, 'And indeed, it must have been a terrible experience for those poor men to be talked to by a Padre like that'." ³⁹ Dunn also mentions in the diary, of a Chaplain who joined up and then transferred to fight with the men and we hear from January 1917, of what a side-show a church parade can be, about how unimportant the presence of a new Chaplain or a Bishop, was in fact, compared to matters such as de-lousing!

The story reads like this: "January 7th, Sunday.- A great to-do was made of a Drumhead Service on our lawn, conducted by our bishop. Troops from the surroundings were brought over. Division and parade turned up in panoply and in force. It is said that a bishop once preached to a mere half-dozen voluntaries. He made such a fuss about the indignity, and the waste of spiritual unction, that an Order from High Up required the attendance of 'the greatest possible number' on

³⁹ Dunn JC, *The War the Infantry Knew 1914-1918*, Cardinal. 1989. p124.

these solemn occasions: hence this crush. One can almost pardon the bishops their banalities since audiences were ordered for them. By special request of Division we have a Chaplain at H.Q. We, for our part, are complaining that Division's arrangements for the delousing of the men's clothing are inefficient, that the refusal of blankets for sterilization at the same time as clothing stultifies its treatment." ⁴⁰

This however was not the only comment upon the church and chaplaincy. Padre ER Jones was picked out in a favourable light by the diary, and it would seem that if you were liked, the men would attend your services, despite them being voluntary. We hear from the diary that, "Down to the Somme period only defaulters, detailed to make a congregation, attended a voluntary church service. At Airaines the Chaplain told me he got a real voluntary congregation of 30; the number reached 70 to 80 later still - Carnarvonshire was largely represented in these numbers. We had a much respected Chaplain at this time." ⁴¹

This respect was gained mostly up the line. Dunn tells us that Jones exposed himself often to enemy fire when carrying a message for ammunition to HQ. On another occasion he was found collecting a number of wounded men from both sides. Yet there still could be no guarantee of attendance at church, no

⁴⁰ *ibid* p289.

⁴¹ *ibid* p430.

matter the respect which the men showed you. The same Chaplain who filled his congregation so well at the Front, when behind the lines discovered that perhaps the men had other things to do to fill their time. On March 31st (Easter Day) 1918, Dunn recounts, "Civilians filled the parish church to the door for the morning service. In the afternoon they sat out of doors in groups, gossiping and drinking beer. (As compared to) Our voluntary services did not draw one worshipper among them all, wholly to the padres indignation."⁴²

This was the situation which the church faced with their new parish. It was one which the National Mission hoped to counter, however it is now fair to say that the national mission failed to meet the ordinary people. Perhaps its best achievement was in the formation of the 'Life and Liberty Movement' headed by William Temple. Out of the mission also came five church reports of some significance and we will consider their findings later. What is interesting to note is that when the nation required deep theological insight to be sought, to answer the many questions which had sunk deep into its psyche, the church turned inward and looked for liturgical and social answers, merely offering plaster bandages to the surface, when many were bleeding inside.

This internal bleeding was caused quite simply by the trauma of war. What would be the response of the church both pastorally and theologically? Pastorally, the situation could

⁴² ibid p460.

be solved relatively simply. The church would deploy chaplains to the war and there they would care for their flock as would be expected of any minister or priest. The chaplains however faced a new situation for which they could not have been prepared. It is well described by the French novelist Henri Barbusse, when he published *Le Feu* in 1916. This novel soon became a classic and influenced both Owen and Sassoon. A story contained in the book concerns a delirious pilot flying over the battlefield on a Sunday morning. Two similar sized crowds gathered at the same time on either sides of the front line. The pilot flies at a lower altitude to investigate more.

Barbusse writes, "Then I understood. It was Sunday, and there were two religious services being held under my eyes - the altar, the padre, and all the crowd of chaps. The more I went down the more I could see that the two things were alike - so exactly alike that it looked silly. One of the services - whichever you like - was a reflection of the other....I went down lower....Then I could hear. I heard one murmur, one only. I could only gather a single prayer that came up to me *en bloc*, the sound of a single chant that passed by me on its way to heaven....I got some shrapnel just at the moment when, very low down, I made out two voices from the earth that made up the one - 'Gott mit uns !' and 'God is with us!' - and I flew away....What must the good God think of it all?" ⁴³

⁴³ Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p109.

This would be a question which was faced with daily regularity by all chaplains on both sides, and for which few came to any significant theological answer both for their own faith and their men's. It is a question asked daily of the current chaplaincy.

Wilkinson tells us, "The wartime ministry of the Church of England in general and the wartime ministry of Anglican chaplains in particular - both have had a bad press." ⁴⁴ This was particularly true of Robert Graves *Goodbye to all That* where Anglican chaplains are depicted as men hated by the troops. Graves writes that if they had shown, "one-tenth the courage, endurance, and other human qualities' of the regimental doctors', a religious revival might have occurred." ⁴⁵ He thought of Anglican chaplains as being entirely out of touch with the men, however he praised highly the efforts of Roman Catholic chaplains.

Guy Chapman's *A Passionate Prodigality*, written in 1933, portrays a similar picture, he writes, "These Catholic priests impressed one. Leeson (the R.C. padre) never dropped a word of religion in my hearing, but one felt a serenity and certitude streaming from him such as was not possessed by our bluff Anglicans. Already there was growing a dislike of these latter. They had nothing to offer but the consolation the next man could give you, and a less fortifying one. The

⁴⁴ *ibid* p110.

⁴⁵ *ibid*.

Church of Rome sent a man into action mentally and spiritually cleaned. The Church of England could only offer you a cigarette. The Church of Rome, experienced in propaganda, sent its priests into the line. The Church of England forbade theirs forward of Brigade Headquarters, and though many, realizing the fatal blunder of such an order, came just the same, the publication of that injunction had its effect." ⁴⁶

It would be unfair to hang an especial blame on chaplains, especially since the vast majority were civilian clergy straight out of a parish and thus largely unprepared for the circumstances they faced. Siegfried Sassoon highlights for us the dilemma of the relevancy of chaplaincy, when the shackles of parish priesthood are not overcome within the forces arena. His George Sherston, who is a self-portrait, is a man who once loved the parish model of Christianity. He notes that the churches' calendar, one, which could be followed ardently at home, no longer seemed to fit in France.

He writes with reference to a friend just killed, "I remembered that it was Easter Sunday. Standing in that dismal ditch, I could find no consolation in the thought that Christ was risen...The essential season in the Church calendar was not, as far as I remember, remarked upon by anyone in my company, although the name of Christ was often on our lips....These innocuous blasphemings of the holy name were a peculiar feature of the War, in which the principles of

⁴⁶ *ibid* p111.

Christianity were either obliterated or falsified for the convenience of all who were engaged in it. Up in the trenches every man bore his own burden; the Sabbath was not made for man; and if any man laid down his life for his friends it was no part of his military duties. To kill an enemy was an effective action; to bring in one of our own wounded was praiseworthy, but un-related to war aims. The Brigade chaplain did not exhort us to love our enemies. He was content to lead off with the hymn 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds'! I mention this war-time dilemma of the Churches because my own mind was in rather a muddle at that time." ⁴⁷

Wilfred Owen, a man who once seriously considered the priesthood as a calling within the Church of England but who came to loathe the horrors of the trenches, wrote these words as regards faith and the effect of war upon him. "I am more and more Christian as I walk the unchristian ways of Christendom. Already I have comprehended a light which never will filter into the dogma of any national church: namely that one of Christ's essential commands was: Passivity at any price! Suffer dishonour and disgrace; but never resort to arms. Be bullied, be outraged, be killed; but do not kill. It may be chimerical and an ignominious principle, but there it is. It can only be ignored: and I think pulpit professionals are ignoring it very skilfully and successfully indeed." ⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *ibid* p112.

⁴⁸ *ibid* p114.

This is not entirely true. In fact this dilemma was thought through, especially by Studdert Kennedy as we shall see later in this chapter. It was also an issue which Bonhoeffer, as we shall see in the next chapter, wrestled with throughout his life, culminating in his involvement in the bomb plot to assassinate Hitler. Owen was not aware of either; but what we can see is the common thread that a crisis situation demands answers of the Church both pastorally and theologically.

The social class of the Chaplain was an issue some felt caused a division between the soldier and the church. Certainly officer status in the Army was unhelpful, yet with naval chaplaincy, where no rank is held, the same opinions can often be found, since the Chaplain has Wardroom status. Who your friends are tells a tale! It takes a strong personality to overcome many sceptics in the lower mess decks.

Donald Hanket wrote the now famous book, *A Student in Arms*, which by the end of 1916 had reached its seventh edition. Wilkinson states, "Two main themes emerge from the book - the breaking down of social and class barriers in the New Army; and the need for the churches and theology to be humble and open enough to comprehend (in all senses) the deep experiences of the men at war." ⁴⁸

In Chapter 7, *The Religion of the Inarticulate*, Hanket claimed that ordinary men understood theology as written in the poems

⁴⁸ *ibid* p119.

of Studdert Kennedy. The men truly are inarticulate; they cannot comprehend religious language, as Bonhoeffer would later claim. What they could understand was kindness, humility, generosity and charity. He wrote, "I am certain that if a chaplain wants to be understood and to win their sympathy he must begin by showing them that Christianity is the explanation and the justification and the triumph of all that they do now really believe in. He must start by making their religion articulate in a way which they will recognise....In doing this perhaps he will find a stronger faith than his own. It is certainly arguable that we educated Christians are in our way almost as inarticulate as the educated whom we always want to instruct....If the working man's religion is often wholly inarticulate, the real religion of the educated man is quite often wrongly articulated." ⁵⁰

The chaplains however were not much helped in the early days by their superiors. FR Barry is such an example. In 1915 he joined the Army chaplain's Department at the tender age of twenty five and had only been a priest for a few months. He writes, "When the padres first went out with the B.E.F., the army had little idea what to do with them. In battle, they were left behind at the base and were not allowed to go up to the fighting front. What on earth, it was asked, could they do up there? A colonel would say, 'No work for you today, padre', meaning by that, no corpses for burial. The chaplains' job was to take church parades, on such rare

⁵⁰ *ibid* p120.

occasions as these were practicable, to run entertainments, to help in censoring letters, and in general to act as welfare officers, thereby helping to keep up morale." ⁵¹

On arrival in France, however, Barry discovered a different scenario. "The chaplains were allowed to move freely everywhere and when the units 'went up' we went with them. Several were awarded V.C.'s, and a substantial number were killed in action. (I lost two at Gouzeaucourt.) We would give Holy Communion in the dugouts, minister to the wounded and dying, share, so far as we might, in what the troops endured. But we did not share the worst thing of all that those kind and often sensitive men had to suffer; we did not have to kill other human beings. We did what we could to serve them in Christ's name - and surely the distribution of cigarettes was a relevant form of the cup of cold water - and they understood that this was why we were doing it. They did not regard us as just welfare officers. In some dim way they discovered that they needed what the ministry of the Church sought to offer." ⁵²

It would be quite wrong then to swallow whole all the bad press given to chaplains during the Great War. As we have noted above, chaplains did indeed, by 1915, move freely to the front and here they found a role for themselves. It is to some of these chaplains which we will now turn.

⁵¹ *ibid* p129.

⁵² *ibid*.

I.2 The Chaplains of the Front

The first thing we must consider before looking at chaplains who served in the front line is the new parish into which they had been placed. This parish was a social and economic phenomenon in its own right. Malcolm Brown describes it as such. "The zone of the trenches became more than a geographical location, a piece of territory assigned for close fighting. It became a thing of itself. It acquired its own personality...Over the years the Western Front grew and developed until it became a society, a world on its own, a temporary alternative civilization - except that that is an incongruous word to use about a form of human activity devoted by definition to mass destruction. Its ramifications stretched far behind the fire-step and the machine-gun post, to the artillery lines, the billet villages, the supply dumps, the training-grounds, the casualty clearing stations, the base hospitals, the veterinary establishments, not to mention the baths (often brewery vats) to which the troops came to be deloused. And the estaminets and the brothels, one might add, and the towns and cities away from the war zone into which men could occasionally escape for a taste of quasi-normal life. It also had its postal and transport systems, its own labour organization, its canteens, its concerts, its burial force. More, and crucially, at all levels from brigade to GHQ it had its Staff personnel. Overall, indeed, far more men engaged in administration and organization than in fighting." ⁵³ All this

⁵³ Brown M, *The Western Front*, Sidgwick and Jackson. 1993. pX.

indeed for a Front which for the majority of the war stretched over an area of less than one hundred miles.

Trench warfare was a new experience, it was also disturbing because it was completely unexpected. It brought with it a siege mentality, coupled to a more sophisticated form of war, with denser defence systems, more threatening and more harmful to the infantryman. Here, a different form of religion arose amongst the ranks, as opposed to more conventional Christianity. Fatalism, became the religion of most men at the Front.

John Kelman said, "From the first days of the war, no phenomenon was more generally recognised than fatalism. It was almost if not altogether universal among men when they were going up to face the chance of immediate death, and it was equally observable among the survivors who returned alive, leaving many of their comrades dead upon the field. The common phrases were that if their number was up they would be killed, and that nothing could get them except the bullet or the bit of shrapnel which had their name on it...Heads were shaken over this way of meeting danger. It was considered pagan and superstitious by men who had never been themselves face to face with imminent death. But even those who had blamed it found to their surprise that, when their own turn came, precisely the same fatalism came with it. Then they discovered that it was simply natural and human...It is incredible that men should find strength or comfort in

transferring their responsibilities to a mere abstraction, but this fatalism did certainly bring both comfort and strength. Surely it must imply a subconscious sense of Someone somewhere to whom they were passing over their burdens." ⁵⁴

Brown writes on this matter, "The key question in most men's minds was not, however, the righteousness of the cause for which they were fighting, that was largely taken for granted, but the matter of their and their comrades' survival...For many, conventional religion could supply all the answers...For many, perhaps the majority, conventional religion could not resolve like these (those who lived/those who died) to their satisfaction, and there grew up a widespread, simply expressed fatalism, of which the essential belief was that if you were to live you were to live, if you were to die..." ⁵⁵

This was not the whole story however, for as Brown points out, "...there were substantial areas in which war fatalism could offer neither help nor satisfaction, and where organized religion could and did step in to considerable effect. The role of the Army chaplain, indeed, grew rather than diminished as the war went on, for it was the chaplains who took care of the rituals associated with death and burial and the chaplains who wrote thousands of letters of consolation to the families of the killed 'other ranks' which in the majority of cases would otherwise have received only the cold notification of

⁵⁴ Kelman J, *The War and Preaching*, Yale University Press. USA. 1919. p76.

⁵⁵ Brown M, *The Western Front*, Sidgwick and Jackson. 1993. p91.

the state." ⁵⁶

For all the poor examples of chaplaincy, which we have noted, there were, then, many chaplains who did indeed make the connection between the church, her task and the trenches. Their work, when done appropriately, was appreciated. Brown writes, "Significantly, the most successful chaplains were not those who saw the war as an opportunity to proselytise or to obtain what were known as 'wind-up' conversions, but those who realized that their best service to their men was to go out and suffer with them - and help in every *human* way they could. The following letter was written in April 1916 by Captain W. Bell, the Adjutant of the 4th Royal Fusiliers, to the mother of the Reverend E. N. Mellish, an Anglican chaplain who was to emerge from the war with both a Military and a Victoria Cross:

I cannot let this opportunity pass of telling you what a splendid man your son Noel is. During the recent operations at St Eloi in which my Battn unfortunately lost heavily, he did the work of ten men in dressing and helping wounded men. He is a most modest and unassuming man, and would probably say 'he was only doing his little job', but I was there and I know the splendid work he did, many a man owes his life to your son, and we are proud of him. The men of the Battalion love him, and swear by 'our Padre'.

⁵⁶ *ibid* p95.

In the end it was the deed, rather than the word, that spoke to men in such extreme situations. At a time when conventional creeds could seem not to apply, religion could hold its place through the activities of its finest practioners. More beneath all the doubts and uncertainties, there was unquestionably a basic, ingrained sense of Christian hope, a belief, for many a confidence even, that somehow all the blatant, terrible injustices of war would be put right beyond the grave." ⁵⁷

The war put a great strain upon the faith of the chaplains themselves, it was a shock to many of them that they too would question their belief structure in a manner similar to their men. FR Barry summed up the problems for chaplaincy as this, "Our real problems were very much deeper than that (swearing and womanizing). Was this something for which we should upbraid men who were enduring far more than we were? Or could there be something lacking in religion? For we learnt in battle how splendid and how noble these apparently irreligious people were. How were these grand qualities related to the Gospel that we had been ordained to preach? We could not conclude, of course, that they did not need it; but what message had the Gospel for them and in what form ought it to be presented? And beyond all that, in so evil a situation, of which the devil seemed to be in control, how could we go on believing in God at all, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?...We had to re-examine our fundamentals and to hammer

⁵⁷ *ibid* p96.

out a working theology which could stand the test of battle-conditions and give men a faith that could overcome the world...The question was: What is the Gospel really about? Only an other-worldly salvation? The troops were asked radical questions now about the social and economic structure which they were supposed to be fighting to preserve. Were they worth preserving?...The chaplains did what they could to guide these questionings." ⁵⁸

"How is it, with the soul of the soldier?" ⁵⁹ asked Alexander Irvine in 1918. "Millions of tracts have been written. They are written from the standpoint of the creeds. Tommy does not read them. No greater waste has occurred in this war than the paper wasted in tracts!...No new words in the vocabulary of religion, no new ideas of the divine, no new hopes have been born in the cataclysm...We are still wearing the second-hand intellectual garments of the middle ages and they fit us as the armour in the Tower of London would fit the fighting men in Flanders!" ⁶⁰

Tommy, for Irvine, as with others, seemed to have a better knowledge of the divine than the church. His cry was for padres to start to distinguish themselves in the field of the intellect of the soul. This passing away of the old garments for new ones is very similar to Bonhoeffer's thought when faced with a later cataclysm, which we will examine later.

⁵⁸ Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p140.

⁵⁹ Irvine A, *God and Tommy Atkins*, Hutchison and Co. 1918. p7.

⁶⁰ *ibid* p8.

David Cairns, Professor of Dogmatics and Apologetics at United College, Aberdeen, when preaching in 1917 said, "Christians have to win this faith in a new fashion, and have got to go out and dominate the whole world with that faith." ⁶¹ This would be a battle fought for the chaplains, as much with themselves as with others.

Charles Raven, the Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge when the war started, attempted to answer many of these questions posed by Barry and Irvine. He became a Chaplain in 1917, and in April of that year was involved in the heavy fighting on Vimy Ridge. It was here that he was to experience Christ's reality "...when death looked me in the face, my manhood withered and collapsed. For what seemed hours I was in an agony of fear...and suddenly as if spoken in the very room His words 'For their sakes I consecrate myself' and the fragrant splendour of His presence... for the next nine months He was never absent, and I never alone, and never save for an instant or two broken by fear. If He who was with me when I was blown up by a shell, and gassed, and sniped at, with me in hours of bombardment and the daily walk of death, was an illusion, then all that makes life living for me is illusion too..." ⁶²

Wilkinson tells us of Raven, "He shared his troops' dangers to the full. He described spending an hour with an unknown private, under fire from a howitzer in a small hollow. Shells

⁶¹ Matthews B, *Christ and the World at War*, James Clark and Co. 1917. p43.

⁶² Wilkinson A, *The Church of England and the First World War*, SPCK. 1978. p141.

kept bursting near; he appealed to the private to stay still, then suddenly realized 'that at each explosion he had put his body in the mouth of the hollow between it and me, offering his life for mine many times under conditions that try the manhood of the bravest'. His theology and temperament enabled him to see at times a cosmic glory in all experience, however horrible: 'down the trench came a stretcher-party and a shapeless bundle that an hour before had been a laughing boy. And the presence enfolded him - plants and insects, the dead and the living were all ablaze with the Shechinah of God'...Theologically, the war led Raven to be highly critical of easy language about divine omnipotence." ⁶³

Such thoughts were shared with Studdert Kennedy. In an essay largely written on the battlefield, Raven showed himself to be powerfully drawn to Romans 8:18-28 with its language of cosmic conflict and struggle, and in the years to come he repeatedly preached from it because it intensified and concentrated the whole cosmic process in which the cross is central. He preached, "It is in His agony that He is most manifestly divine." ⁶⁴

Father John Groser is another Chaplain worthy of examination. He would go on to work famously in London's East End and belonged to the Catholic socialist tradition found at Mirfield College. He served with an infantry regiment between 1915 -

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid* p142.

1918. Not noted for his love of officer status, preferring to live with the men, he was wounded and returned home, mentioned in dispatches and awarded the MC. However by the end he was beginning to see the war as a crime against humanity.

Another Chaplain, John Walker, like Groser joined in 1915. He went straight to the western front. There he was reported to have buried 900 dead at a casualty station over a three month period. In a 24 hour span, 1,300 men arrived, Walker ministered to them all, however he noted, "Tommy does not want religion. I don't persuade him." ⁶⁵ On the infamous first day of the Somme he wrote, "We have 1,500 in and still they come, 3-400 officers, it is a sight - chaps with fearful wounds lying in agony, many so patient, some make a noise, one goes to a stretcher, lay's one's hand on the forehead, it is cold, strike a match, he is dead, here a Communion, there an absolution, there a drink, there a madman, there a hot water bottle and so on - one madman was swearing and kicking, I gave him a drink, he tried to bite my hand and squirted the water from his mouth into my face..." ⁶⁶ He wrote that many were prepared to receive his care, few would come to his services, "They would come as a favour to me if I pressed them, at least some would, but what is the use." ⁶⁷ Wilkinson states that he returned to his country parish defeated.

Neville Talbot became a chaplain with his brother Keble when

⁶⁵ *ibid* p143.

⁶⁶ *ibid*.

⁶⁷ *ibid* p144.

the war broke out. He served throughout the war, eventually becoming the Assistant Chaplain-General to the Fifth Army. Wilkinson comments on him with words which resonate with those of Bonhoeffer as we shall later read: "To Neville, religion seemed so separate from the ordinary world. Perhaps the separateness of the ordained ministry should be abolished? Perhaps some priests, deacons, and deaconesses should earn their own livings in lay professions? They would be able to speak in *kingdom vernacular*. It was such a formidable task for the soldier to discover the true treasure of Christianity; he wrote in November 1917: Men must dig in that strange field of Christianity through its odd and in part misleading, part repellent surface: it is mosaic of kill-joyism and Balaam's ass's ears, and Noah and Mothers' Meetings and Athanasian damns and the Archbishop of Canterbury with £15,000 a year - through to the treasure." ⁶⁸ Neville was very popular.

Working for Neville Talbot was another famous Chaplain, Philip Tubby Clayton. They rented a house in Poperinghe in 1915 and it became a club for the men. It is named Talbot House and is still open and can be enjoyed as I have done with my family. It is called Toc H after the signaller's shorthand for Talbot House. A chapel was put in the loft and is still there. Interestingly there is no communion rail separating man and priest. On Easter Day 1916, there were ten celebrations of the Eucharist. In May 1916, thirty seven men were confirmed in the attic chapel. Tubby Clayton spent much of his time in

⁶⁸ *ibid* p145.

the front line, where in the Ypres Salient there were heavy losses in the last few years of the war.

Having looked closely at the issues chaplains faced during the war and indeed at the chaplains themselves, one wonders what level of training and pastoral care they themselves received? Civilian Bishops did indeed visit their colleagues in France, Guy Rogers recalls a visit made by Archbishop Davidson in May 1916. "I saw him in a motor in his archiepiscopal robes with a tin helmet on his head. That I think must surely be one of the sights of the war." ⁶⁹ Likewise Archbishop Lang visited the troops and the chaplains in 1915, when he spent a month with the Grand Fleet and two years later travelled to visit the western front.

Wilkinson tells us, "His main business in France was to attend conferences of chaplains; he found them in critical mood. Harry Blackburne told Archbishop Davidson on one of his visits to France: 'The bishops are sitting like a lot of old hens on eggs which they do not know how to hatch'." ⁷⁰

In February 1917, having accepted that all was not well in terms of support for their chaplains, the army opened St. Omer House where all chaplains attended compulsory courses and retreats. What was noticed was that, "All were weary and in need of spiritual and physical refreshment. Some had grown

⁶⁹ *ibid* p151.

⁷⁰ *ibid*.

slack and depressed, a few had fallen into grave sin. The romance of conducting services in barns and Eucharists on packing cases had palled...the combatant might try to shut his heart to all feeling; the chaplain could or should not. Most chaplains as Christian leaders inevitably felt more keenly than others the tremendous strain of constantly trying to reconcile their beliefs with the war. The pressures on the chaplain to become merely the mouthpiece of the military authorities were very great. Sometimes unsure of his role, treated as a jack-of-all-trades, sometimes feeling neither accepted by officers nor by men as a priest, wearied with indifference and misunderstanding, tired of innuendos that if he was a 'real man' he would be fighting, it was tempting for him to solve all these tensions by a display of bellicosity...B.K. Cunningham in 1919 summed up the lessons he had learned from the experience of running the school: 'My own opinion is that the pre-war theological system, as judged by the padres it produced, did not come well out of the experience of war; the devotional training had been along too narrow lines and depended too much on favourable environment, and when that was no longer given the padre was apt to lose his bearings'." ⁷¹

I.3 Armistice, MacLeod and the Iona Community

Simone Weil once said, "I have never once had, even for a moment, the feeling that God wants me to be in the Church...So

⁷¹ *ibid* p152.

many things are outside it, so many things that I love and do not want to give up, so many things that God loves, otherwise they would not be in existence." ⁷²

As the men were returning from the Front with their own ideas Sassoon's words are worth hearing, "We were the survivors; few among us would ever tell the truth to our friends and relations in England. We were carrying something in our heads which belonged to us alone, and to those who had left us in battle." ⁷³

Wilkinson notes, "There is a sad and striking absence of any real wrestling with the theological and ethical problems raised by the war itself. It is astonishing that nowhere in the Reports (post war) is there any discussion of the ethics of peace and war... the significance of the incognito Christ discovered by chaplains and men, and memorably by Owen, Sassoon, and other poets. Above all, it⁷⁴ failed to discuss the meaning of salvation and whether the secular has a necessary and God-given role; the assumption was that the secular was to be assimilated by the Church, not wrestled with dialectically." ⁷⁵

Two major reports on religion were to come out of the experience of the Great War. In 1917, a group of Anglican

⁷² *ibid* p89.

⁷³ *ibid* p90.

⁷⁴ *ibid* p89 (The Report on Evangelism).

⁷⁵ *ibid*.

chaplains wrote *The Church in the Furnace* and in 1919 an inter-denominational group published *The Army and Religion*. This latter report founded it's work around a questionnaire. Three questions were asked of the respondents 1. What are the men thinking about Religion, Morality and Society? 2. Has the war made men more open to a religious appeal or has it created new difficulties for belief? 3. What proportion of the men are vitally connected to any of the Churches, and what do they think of the Churches?

What they discovered was that since the start of the Industrial Revolution, the Church had been falling away. Those who fought in the war had little use for the Church and yet there was a great need for crosses to be placed upon grave stones. They were not without a sense of God, most prayed prior to battle and thanked God upon survival. Neville Talbot wrote words very similar to Bonhoeffer saying, "The soldier has got religion, I am not sure that he has got Christianity."⁷⁶ Religion tended to concentrate upon the after-life, which is hardly surprising and when death was not in the forefront of one's mind it disappeared. The trouble with religion was Job's question of suffering, especially for Christianity. How could an all loving God, believed to be omnipotent be reconciled with the gore of the trenches? Why was there innocent suffering? Did God want this to happen?

Interestingly, there was universal respect for Jesus, but the

⁷⁶ *ibid* p161.

Churches were mostly disliked. The crucified Christ was attractive, a fellow sufferer; virtually no-one had the belief that Christ was the risen Son of God. Wilkinson states, "The cross meant self-sacrifice, not atonement. Though the war had stimulated religious awareness and prayer, it was not connected with Christianity or the Churches. Perhaps as the result of the prominence of the Ten Commandments in the Communion service and elsewhere, Christianity was commonly thought of in negative terms - not swearing, not drinking and so on...The war had revealed both the heights and depths of human nature; a Major commented: It was a wet, cold morning, about 6.0 a.m. in winter, on the Somme. I saw half a dozen of my boys taking charge of two infantrymen at their last gasp from wet, mud, fatigue and exposure. The poor fellows had actually lain down to die on the roadside by our battery. My men gave them their breakfast (we were short of rations in those days), their socks (we were short of these), shirts and everything; and rubbed them and lit fires all around them and sweated over them, and got them to hospital. Now they would be utterly surprised to hear that any of this had got to do with morality or religion. Morality had to do with not breaking laws." ⁷⁷ The washing of feet was indeed a sacrament for many in the first war and so the commandment was followed by many intuitively.

Poor religious education was highlighted, the men had not been prepared, it seems that one of the few religious activities

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

deemed to have general worth was hymn singing. Friendship was identified by one Sergeant as a 'sacrament of life', for whilst the war produced quite awful behaviour amongst the men, it also produced great actions. Soldiers were great fatalists and would receive communion before a battle in the front line, rather than in a base camp.

In terms of those with Church connections, twenty per cent of the men were still involved in one way or another. (The numbers were higher for the Scots). Criticisms of the Church were that it was out of touch, irrelevant; the churches themselves were divided and contained rivalry, a Chaplain required personality, his ordination meant nothing. The Churches were not supporters of social justice, they were linked into the State (Church of England) and unable to recognise that the Spirit was working through contemporary movements such as the emancipation of women. These were strong words of conclusion from the research committee, yet its recommendations were ultimately flawed.

It emphasised the need to reach the 80 per cent whom the civilian church had failed to touch prior to the war. Education was thus stressed, where the Bible was shown to be the advocate of social justice, in terms of the new democracy discovered, the church must mimic these changes within her own administration. The churches should assume responsibility in accepting that they did not oppose the war strongly enough from the outset and was not distinctive in what it had to say

about the war.

The report recognised the identification by the men of the crucified Christ who had been forgotten in times of peace. He was re-discovered and expressed in the popular poem by Lucy Whitmell (a poem I use often to this day with service men and women) an excerpt of which is below:

Now we remember; over here in Flanders -
(Isn't it strange to think of You in Flanders) -
This hideous warfare seems to make things clear.
We never thought about You much in England -
But now that we are far away from England -
We have no doubts, we know that You are here.

You helped us pass the jest along the trenches
Where, in cold blood, we waited in the trenches -
You touched it's ribaldry and made it fine.
You stood beside us in our pain and weakness -
We're glad to think You understand our weakness -
Somehow it seems to help us not to whine.⁷⁸

The report concluded on a high, which now in hindsight looks remarkably naive, emphasising the fact that 350,000 men had pledged to serve Christ and His kingdom. The committee threw its weight behind ecumenism, social concern and church reform.

⁷⁸ *ibid* p164.

Liberal theology would be the answer for them as opposed to the neo-orthodox approach of Barth which was emerging. As compared to the Archbishop's report however, the army report revealed the true lack of depth of religious belief in the nation. However, the reports greatest failing was theological. Not seriously thinking through the theology of the incognito Christ, the suffering servant and use of this picture for mission was a shame. A connection had been made by many of the men with the figure of Christ as a fellow sufferer to whom they were drawn. Christ's weakness could become strength for the church because of the identification with those who fought. Perhaps many for the first time understood what the church was truly about? It is this discovery, ignored by the civilian church following the war which we will examine in detail both theologically and practically in the last chapter.

The Church in the Furnace report was, as mentioned, a collection of seventeen essays written by Anglican chaplains. Most of the findings were similar to that which we have already examined. FR Barry however, wrote these words of theological import in the report, which perhaps go some way toward answering Wilkinson's criticism over the wash up from the war. "War unmasks the trivialities in religion; it impels one to take 'the devil' seriously, it sweeps away false ideas of divine omnipotence conceived of as Olympian and passionless: 'Our God in His manward aspect...is a Being who is limited and striving'. The worship of a sweet, gentle

Jesus must surely disappear." ⁷⁹

Studdert Kennedy wrote, in one of the essays, "Why are the men whose courage, gallantry and cheerfulness, we are bound to admire indifferent to Christianity? This is the question that all of us ask ourselves....The root of the soldier's blasphemy is the same as that of his humour, and that is why they are so often mixed. They are both efforts to solve a felt but unformulated contradiction in life, and they are both essentially Christian, the signs of a lost sheep of the Good Shepherd." ⁸⁰ Such thoughts struck a young man called George Macleod on his return from the front. His answer would be to ultimately form the Iona Community as a means to finding the lost sheep of the Good Shepherd.

In 1938, two years after Bonhoeffer formed his community of Ministers of the Confessing Church at Finkenwalde, George MacLeod formed the Iona Community. It survives to this day with around two hundred and fifty full members, fifteen hundred associates and fourteen hundred friends.⁸¹ It is an ecumenical community of men and women committed to the Gospel imperatives with especial attention being paid to issues of peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The community has members and associates world wide. Members and associates share a common rule of life around a discipline of daily prayer, mutual accountability and involvement in secular

⁷⁹ *ibid* p167.

⁸⁰ *ibid* p168.

⁸¹ For a fuller description see *Coracle*, October 2002 p2. The Iona Community.

issues. The heart of the community remains the small Scottish island of Iona where St. Columba first established his community of monks on 12th May 563. It would be the thought of rebuilding the monastic ruins of Iona Abbey in 1938 which would become an outward sign of MacLeod's inner hope, that through the Iona Community the Christian church in Scotland and beyond would be rebuilt. This building however would not be solely on Iona itself, for MacLeod would base his community ministry teams in and around the poverty ridden parishes of Glasgow. The rebuilding of the Abbey itself would offer a place of respite for spiritual and physical nourishment of community members and parishioners from the inner cities. It was thus for mission to the un-churched, poverty ridden masses of the depression, that Iona Abbey was rebuilt and the community formed.

Few people realise that it was because of his First World War experiences that George MacLeod formed the Iona Community. On the 21st and 22nd August 1917, a young Lt George MacLeod was awarded the Military Cross for his involvement in the Third Battle of Ypres (better known as Passchendale). MacLeod served with the 12th Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders with whom he had enlisted as part of Kitcheners Army in 1915. His war is described by Ferguson as "...a good war. He served in three battalions, saw a fair bit of action, was decorated for bravery and, above all, survived." ⁸²

⁸² Ferguson R, *George Macleod*, Wild Goose Publications. 1990. p53.

MacLeod's experiences during the war are unremarkable in that he experienced the same trauma, discomfort and bouts of boredom that all men faced on the Western Front. His citation for bravery states that he was awarded the Military Cross, "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty as adjutant, volunteering to go out and do duty in the hastily-organised line of defence when no company officers remained. He carried out his duties as adjutant as well, and was of the greatest assistance in keeping cohesion." ⁸³

What concerns us for this work, as regards George MacLeod, was the influence the war had on him in his future ministry. How did it shape him? Ferguson tells us "He had not been overmuch impressed by religion as he had encountered it in the army. His diary has several unflattering references to church parades, such as 'rotten service and sermon', 'a just dismal affair', 'sermon about carnage-bunkum', and he condemned one minister as a 'guess-I think-so preacher'. (he exempted from these strictures the Revd G.A. Studdert-Kennedy - 'Woodbine Willie' whom he heard speak at the end of the war and whom he considered to be an exceptional man. As he chafed in the makeshift pew, the great Norman's grandson reckoned he could do much better: the man who condemned the British for waging a half hearted war against the enemy had decided that he wanted to go full tilt against the atheists." ⁸⁴ Ferguson also highlights that it was during the war that MacLeod became a

⁸³ ibid p61.

⁸⁴ ibid p71.

Christian and "surrendered his life to Christ." ⁸⁵

MacLeod started his theological studies at Edinburgh University following the war and in 1921 he set off on a post graduate course at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Ferguson states, "In March 1922, there came a meeting with the man who, more than any other human being, was to be his (MacLeod's) example and mentor. P.B. ('Tubby') Clayton, founder of Toc H, visited New York to raise funds, Clayton, an army chaplain in Flanders, had established a hostel in 1915 in the Ypres salient, named Talbot House (motto: 'Abandon rank all ye who enter here'), which had ministered to the needs of half a million men. After the war, some officers and men had got together to see if they could perpetuate the spirit of co-operation among all classes which they had seen at Talbot House. Thus Toc H (The Morse signal for the Talbot House initials) was born. The post-war plan was to collect young men of all classes and denominations to meet together in Christian fellowship, to set up hostels as a base for small Christian communities, and to recruit young men for voluntary service.

George had been very impressed by the work and reputation of Talbot House in Ypres and had signed up as a member of Toc H. In facing front-line dangers during the war, he had felt denominational differences to be irrelevant, and he liked the way in which Toc H provided a base for people of all Christian

⁸⁵ ibid p72.

traditions. They were serious, yet not pompous, about their faith, and they had an ability to communicate with the ordinary 'Jock'. It was his kind of movement, and it was to prove very influential in the thinking which led up to the establishment of the Iona Community." ⁸⁶

Clayton became the Commanding Officer and MacLeod would be his Adjutant and to begin with, MacLeod helped with raising funds for Toc H in America (something he would later do for his own community). On MacLeod's return to Scotland he would be ordained by Glasgow Presbytery to be the city chaplain for Toc H. He accepted this calling because "...it is the only movement that I can see that is doing anything big for the wandering boy in the city". ⁸⁷

The nation to which MacLeod had returned from the war was a divided one in terms of prosperity. To MacLeod this notion of two nations was an affront to all that he had found true in the trenches and at Talbot House. It was his belief that it was the role of the church to heal these deep divisions in society, in Jesus name, and provide leadership in this matter to the nation. So Toc H became for MacLeod (in Scotland) what the Industrial Christian Fellowship did for Studdert Kennedy (in England) as we shall see later. For both, these organisations were simply seen as the best means of engaging the Christian message to the demobbed men of the trenches and

⁸⁶ *ibid* p79.

⁸⁷ *ibid* p81.

their families in their time of need. Like Kennedy, MacLeod found that the ordinary man may have had no time for the church but still had plenty of time for the message of Jesus of Nazareth.

MacLeod's work with Toc H resulted in him truly encountering the underworld of poverty in Glasgow. This was a social strata which Studdert Kennedy had encountered throughout his life, both at his father's vicarage in Leeds and in his various parishes. To MacLeod this was largely a new experience, although he achieved much success. He helped many a 'wandering urchin' in his time with Toc H, one such fellow was George Adie. He states "I first met him (MacLeod) when I was fifteen. I was in a boys' home in Argyle Street, because my father used to beat me. Toc H sent visitors to the club, and they used to help us. One night I was standing shivering under the canopy in Gordon Street, drookit as a rat, when I felt a hand on the back of my neck. It was George MacLeod. He took me to his house, and got the cook to make me a meal at ten o'clock at night. He contacted the Church of Scotland and got me a job in the market garden. He was great fun. He wore a homborg hat all the time, and he used to kick it right downstairs then put it on his head! He used to sit down at the piano and sing songs with the men at the Pitt Street club. When he saw me on the streets, he would give me money for accommodation." ⁸⁸

⁸⁸ ibid p88.

Sadly, MacLeod's time with Toc H would not be long. It was not the work which would drive him out but rather church politics. This is where the devil is in the detail. With the success of Toc H being replicated on the home front following it's time in Flanders, people of all denominations and classes were indeed being drawn into one fellowship. How would the denominational churches with all their rulings respond?

Ferguson writes, "In Flanders, the 'upper room' in Talbot House had been for all denominations; when All Hallows church in Barking became Toc H's spiritual home, it was announced that there would be holy communion for confirmed Anglicans, and that others would go to a Free Church for the sacrament. For the Glasgow padre, this was an outrage. Either they all sat at one table at All Hallows, or they separated communion from the movement...He (MacLeod) had been excited by Toc H because it promised to break down class and denominational barriers in the spirit of wartime cooperation. He hoped it would be in the front line of denominational change. What he saw was a denial of the kind of community necessary to give leadership to a nation." ⁸⁹

MacLeod resigned from Toc H and took on a prestigious position as a collegiate minister at St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh. But it would be as the Parish Minister in Govan, Glasgow where MacLeod would continue his desired engagement of taking the gospel to the un-churched. There were two main attractions which brought MacLeod to Govan. Firstly, there was a strong

⁸⁹ *ibid* p91.

family connection to the church and secondly, along with the church, came the Pearce Institute building which would be the centre used for outreach and mission in the parish. The problem of reaching the working man and women still existed in the church, but for MacLeod at Govan Old Parish Church, the answer to that problem would be the Institute building. It was during his time at Govan that ideas for a community of men, living and working in a team ministry emerged. In the first instance these workers would work for MacLeod in the chaplaincy team at the Pearce Institute and it would be this community that would expand into the Iona Community.

In his first few years in Govan, MacLeod overworked, this resulted in a breakdown. Perhaps his breakdown was also partly due to the shock of truly encountering poverty in the raw and living amongst it? On return to the parish, three months later, MacLeod realised that he could not do everything on his own. Thus did MacLeod gather around him such future great names in the church as David Cairns, Hugh Douglas, John Symington and Harry Whitley, to work with him in the Govan team ministry. The precedent for such a community was set by Cyril Garbutt, a future Archbishop of York, who had Tubby Clayton as one of his curates. Garbutt developed a team ministry for outreach in Portsea before the war, just as MacLeod would do in Govan after it. Just like the apostolic succession, do good ideas get passed down and around.

The ministry team at Govan produced some great results for the

church. Many lapsed members returned and new ones arose. The place was 'heaving', as they say in Glasgow. MacLeod was convinced that success was achieved through team ministry, where the best of the divinity students would come together on licence and work as missionaries to their own kind. The notion of team ministries was especially important for MacLeod considering the new housing developments springing up around the cities. How would the church minister to these new areas?

At a local level the Govan team ministry worked because it had the right quality of leader, ordinands and a shared vision of bringing the message of Jesus of Nazareth to the un-churched. The team was held and moulded together through Christian prayer and fellowship of the Community Rule (the secret discipline as Bonhoeffer would call it). The Govan group however could not solve the wider problems of the national church. The Church of Scotland was not willing to bring in team ministries to the new church extension charges in the manner which MacLeod wanted. This undermined his deepest conviction that the saving gospel of Christ would not be delivered to these new estates.

The Iona Community was thus a new Govan team ministry on a grander scale. It would unite around one leader, MacLeod, and he would use as the shock ground troops the best of the ordinands available, who would live in community to help maintain their spiritual and physical health during the battle. MacLeod also introduced a form of Celtic Christianity

(in terms of worship) which he found both moving and uniting denominationally. He believed that for all the differences of the Christian denominations in Scotland, they shared the same common heritage of Celtic Christian roots. This appeal to the 'old ways' would overcome, for him, the divisions of later heresies! The missionary zeal of the first Celtic monks was also an attraction for MacLeod, in that it could be used as a motivating symbol for mission to the modern community. Thus would the ecumenism which Toc H could not provide be overcome within the Iona Community, yet keeping the missionary zeal. Ferguson states that MacLeod believed that, "What was required, was a brotherhood within the Church of Scotland into which men could come for the first two or three years of their ministry. The first six months after leaving college would be spent in such community life as would help them rediscover the technique of living together - something which the divinity halls failed to teach. They would then be ready to be drafted out to the congested areas and the housing schemes, where they would put their training into practice. Others again would be seconded to extra-parochial specialist ministries. After two or three years in the brotherhood, they would leave it and serve the church through its more usual channels." ⁹⁰ Such training and organisation of the new community would take place where the mission to the Scots first started, MacLeod's much loved island of Iona.

George Macleod wrote these words on *A Principle of Recovery*:

⁹⁰ *ibid* p159.

"Let us attempt a few ejaculatory hints that may assist us to recover the Hebrew mind. There is first their peculiar claim that the residence of the Spirit is in the blood. The 'Kosher' meat of the orthodox Hebrew has the blood drained from it originally for this mystic reason. As the blood forever courses through the body, so for the Hebrew, spiritual values were linked with what was occurring in the body politic - that is, in their ordinary ongoing history. And, just as if you separate spiritual concerns from social the former become vacuous and the latter crack up. It is our failure to think in these terms that makes us imagine, quite erroneously, that you can deal with the Gospel first and the rest will follow. Secondly, to recover the Hebrew approach, we must remember their peculiar connotation of truth. For them truth was not so much a static noun as an active verb. Man's relation to God was not in response to a set of principles that could be exalted into a series of 'truths' but was an active ongoing betrothal - literally a be-truth-al, best described as a 'Covenant.' Our failure so to think, again, causes us to attempt to convince men of certain Gospel truths in the hope that -sometime- their application will follow. In fact, however, if it isn't an ongoing betrothal, a fatal divorce is established from the start. Thirdly, we must recover what holiness meant to the Hebrew. In the common speech of Queen Elizabeth's time, current when our Bible was translated, holiness had the connotation that we would now associate with healthiness." ⁹¹ Consequently for MacLeod, healthiness was

⁹¹ Macleod GF, *Only One Way Left*, The Iona Community. 1958. p62.

interweaved with the concept of salvation.

MacLeod's thesis centres around the common things in life, the connectedness between social and spiritual, the *covenantal* relationship of God with man and vice versa and the fact that the purpose of holiness is to bring health in its fullness. It would be to this thesis of bringing God's *health* to people that MacLeod would work throughout his career. He recognised that man must exist in community and it would be in and through that community that man would meet God. Indeed, when MacLeod no longer felt the church was meeting that community effectively, through the office of the parish ministers within the inner cities, we have noted that he formed his own community of men. He did so to better prepare them, spiritually and physically for that parish challenge.

It is interesting to note that MacLeod seems to be writing still as the Adjutant of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, a First World War serving appointment. Terms such as 'drafted' come directly from this experience, indeed following the war, and as we have seen, MacLeod's first appointment on ordination was as the TOC H Padre in Glasgow, working for Tubby Clayton. We have noted, it was Clayton and Studdert Kennedy who had powerful effects upon MacLeod and his outlook towards parish ministry and indeed the establishment of team ministries. But most of all it was his shared desire with them, to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its 'healthiness', to the men who he met in the trenches and at

Talbot House, which most inspired him. It is this missionary desire which unites MacLeod, Kennedy and Clayton. All three men used different organisations beyond the normal church structures to attempt to engage with people where they were. MacLeod had the Iona Community, Studdert Kennedy the Industrial Christian Fellowship and Clayton Toc H. This 'sharedness' was forged on the fields of the Western Front and in ecumenical worship at Talbot House.

Ferguson writes, "There is a sense that George had been seeking a new kind of fellowship ever since the cessation of hostilities. The divinity college, Toc H, youth work in Edinburgh, 8 Charlotte Square, the top flat of the Pearce Institute and Fingalton Mil (precursor to the Iona buildings and the MacLeod Centre) were all attempts at the recovery of a lost comradeship and the establishment of a new community. He thought continually in military terms and admired military discipline and fellowship. On one level, the creation of the Iona Community was Captain George MacLeod's latest attempt to establish a new, disciplined regiment trained and equipped for a new fight. It was a reconstructed Toc H, this time with the satisfaction of being his own commanding officer. If he could not find an existing regiment, he would create his own."

Thus, MacLeod's Iona Community was largely built upon the foundations of the First World War Padres' community at Talbot House in the Ypres Salient, started by Tubby Clayton,

supported by Studdert Kennedy and attended by MacLeod. This community would become after the war Toc H, but would lack the ecumenical credentials for MacLeod to stay. His own ecumenical brotherhood, working amongst the un-churched in Scotland, aimed to repeat what TOC H had managed at the Front. Only this time the chaplaincy team would be manned by young Scottish civilian ministers. For MacLeod, the church of the future, in order to reach the un-churched, must take upon itself a new structure of community ministries. The brotherhood would maintain themselves spiritually through a common rule and the theology would be one emphasising a just and loving God who sought social equality where there was none.

Sadly the Iona Community, whilst remaining a voice in church politics in Scotland, has not influenced structural changes to the broader church. MacLeod's original concept of a community of inner city ministers, supporting one another and acting for social justice for their parishioners has however come true in some way. Team ministries are now considered more openly and there is a recognition of the need for a better support structure for ministers by presbyteries within the Church of Scotland. The recent innovation by the Church of Scotland of becoming a 'Church Without Walls',⁹² which we will study in detail in the final chapter, is not new. Nothing generally is in life. MacLeod thought of a church without walls, in 1938,

⁹² See, *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2001*, The Board of Practice and Procedure of the Church of Scotland 2001. p36/1ff

Studdert Kennedy in 1921 and Tubby Clayton pre dated them both in 1915.

As for George MacLeod, he has left us with a legacy, along with Tubby Clayton and the reports and writings of some of the First World War Padres. They all highlight the need for a new church which is ecumenically driven and is concerned and takes action over the concerns of the marginalized and poor in our society. This new church must bring the message of Jesus of Nazareth to the ordinary man and women, where they are and in their own language, 'churchianity' is irrelevant. To do this, better training for the clergy is required, along with ongoing support provided through working in ministry teams (with an accompanying rule of life where an all of one company approach is discovered which then allows for true fellowship to occur). This will help in the task of mission to the un-churched and avoid the minister being overwhelmed physically and spiritually as we have seen with the chaplains at the front and MacLeod in Govan.

Finally, we must note that a concept of the importance of the *incognito Christ* emerged on the Western Front, amongst all talk of new church structures, ecumenism and an all of one company approach to ministry. It is to this concept and a theology of the cross, as suggested by Studdert Kennedy, which we now turn. For his greatest gift to us was a new theology of chaplaincy which the common man could understand through sermon, prose and most notably poetry.

II. STUDDERT KENNEDY

"We are a new race, we priests of France, humbled by much strain and much failure, revolutionaries not at all in spirit, but actually in fact; and while often we sigh for the former days, the processions of splendid offices and the swell of the organ, these will never happen again comfort us unless or until the great multitude also find their approach to God through them." ⁹³

Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy

Why should we study the thoughts of Kennedy when looking at a non-religious interpretation? The answer is that in a time of crisis, as we shall see with Bonhoeffer, Kennedy arrived at a theology which could be believed by ordinary men. He also lived that theology, which is why they believed him. William Purcell in his biography of Kennedy writes: "...he left a glow, and it will be that glow which will concern us in this story, because it is very precious. It is the glow of Christ-like love and understanding combined with an immense ability to make God understood in a world in which, as a person, as a power, as a presence to make Everyman open his soul as a daisy to the sun, he appears sometimes to be dead. There has not been many since who have had that power to do something vital to ordinary life...But Studdert Kennedy can do this still. 'He, being dead, yet speaketh.' And it is important now, thirty years and more after his death, to try and hear what he had to say, and to mark how he said it, and perhaps above all,

⁹³ *ibid.*

what manner of person he was, because he made God live in the hearts of the indifferent to a degree to which very few in this century have attained. How was it done?" ⁹⁴

II.1 The Making of Woodbine Willie

Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy was born on 27th June 1883, son of an Irish vicar whose parish was in a poor district of Leeds. Kennedy was the seventh of nine children from his father's second marriage. As we shall see with Bonhoeffer, the ministry was somewhat in his blood. His grandfather was an Anglican Dean in the Church of Ireland. All fourteen of the children raised in the vicarage became strong church goers and their home was known as, "a good humoured and generous Irish household." ⁹⁵

The greatest influence upon Kennedy, apart from his family, was undoubtedly the poverty ridden, industrialised area of Leeds where he grew up. His father's church at Quarry Hill was in an area dominated by a workhouse, quarry, board school, and back to back terraced housing, for those fortunate enough not to live in dilapidated tenements. Grundy tells us that "...here the seeds were sown of Geoffrey's Christian socialism and his fierce indignation at social wrongs...In that Leeds parish, too, was born Geoffrey's profound affection for the poor - he was always to feel genuinely at home among them. He

⁹⁴ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton, London. 1962. p12

⁹⁵ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Books Ltd. 1997. p12.

saw the strong bonds of community and comradeship that united them and discovered that though they might be poor materially, they were rich in spirit. His whole life was to be committed to the further fulfilment and enrichment of such lives." ⁹⁶

Kennedy's education began at a local private school in Leeds followed by Leeds Grammar where he enjoyed great success. One of the most significant influences upon him at grammar school was his friendship with JK Mozley. Mozley would become President of the Union at Cambridge, a Fellow of Pembroke, head of Leeds Clergy School and then Canon and Chancellor of St. Paul's. He achieved an ecclesiastical and academic success which Kennedy never managed.

In 1926, Mozley published a book called *The Impassibility of God*. Purcell tells us, "The book was concerned with a matter at the heart of all religion - whether God is personally concerned, divinely involved, in the sufferings of mankind, or whether he is 'impassible', beyond the reach of feeling...Such a statement of the question admittedly does violence to the subtleties involved. But there, for him, was the essence of the matter. The great, all important and continuing question was whether God cared. And behind it lay yet a further one: if he cared, how did he show it? It would not be too much to say the search for the answers to these questions, and for a language in which they could be simply and directly communicated to everyman always remained a major preoccupation

⁹⁶ *ibid* p13.

of Geoffrey's." ⁹⁷ We note that this is the nature of the strong link to Bonhoeffer, MacLeod and chaplains past and present.

Theological chat, was of course the most important part of Mozley's and Kennedy's friendship for this study. In Mozley, Kennedy had a man who would challenge his intellect from an early stage and vice versa. The issues which concerned them were the many crises which the church faced, namely the question of suffering and did God care, the new hermeneutical methods for understanding scripture and the emergence of Christian Socialism through such books as *God and my Neighbour*.⁹⁸

Following Leeds Grammar, Kennedy moved on to study at his father's alma mater, Trinity College, Dublin. His success at school was mirrored at college with him emerging with a First in Divinity and Classics. His friendship with Mozley would now be one which endured over a distance, but the bond would remain strong to the end of Kennedy's life. After college Kennedy moved into teaching and taught general subjects at Caldey Grange Grammar School in Lancashire. At Caldey his reading expanded as did his horizons into adult life. He had a fascination for New Psychology and the thoughts of Freud. As an enthusiast he would easily be caught into different areas, but this one of psychology stayed with him. Mozley at

⁹⁷ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p30.

⁹⁸ Written by Blatchford, a socialist pioneer.

this time, said of his friend, "What impressed me was this sense of what the Christian Gospel demanded of him personally. His readiness to face facts as he saw them was now, as always, a striking characteristic of his nature." ⁹⁹

Kennedy remained teaching at Caldey for two and a half years before he moved into training for the ministry of the Church of England at Ripon Clergy College. This calling seems to have simply been a matter of fact for Kennedy. As an emotional man, there seems no great record of calling in this instance, he was always going to be a priest like his father, although there is no record of him stating such, unlike Bonhoeffer. Any doubts which he may have had over the ministry would come in the future. As Purcell says, "All his battles came later; but they arose from the effort to serve Christ rather from doubts as to whether he were in fact the way, the truth and the life." ¹⁰⁰ As with Bonhoeffer, God, Christ, faith, Church and as such their existence were taken as a given for Kennedy.

Completing his training successfully in 1908, Kennedy became a curate at Rugby Parish Church. His Rector at Rugby, in charge of a team ministry with nine curates, was AV Baillie. A man from the 'aristocratic' Anglican Church, godson of Queen Victoria and later to become Dean of Windsor, in many ways he was the complete opposite to Kennedy's father with his Irish

⁹⁹ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p45.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* p42.

background and a parish in Leeds. Baillie was to say of Kennedy, "... (he) was one of the strangest characters I ever knew. An Irishman, with brains, he had infinite charm, complete devotion to his work, and a fine sense of humour. But mentally he was incredibly indisciplined. At least once a week he dashed into my room with some new idea. They were sometimes quite preposterous; but they were always held by him with burning earnestness. If one argued with him gravely about them, he was quite clever enough to have defended his position with success, when the result would have been to harden his beliefs. But his new idea always had a humorous side due to its very exaggeration, and an appeal to that brought him down on his feet again. In his earlier days he preached a sermon in the heat of the moment in which I felt he had gone more than a little too far. After church I took him for a walk in the Rectory garden and, with apparent gravity, I said, 'You know, I think you exaggerated when you said there had been no one between yourself and St. Paul who understood the Gospel'. At once he burst into a shout of uproarious laughter. He had learnt his lesson. I always told him he must not come to me with more than one heresy a week, as after that it became a bore." ¹⁰¹

Under such wise guidance Kennedy would prosper and was greatly loved by the parishioners. Grundy tell us "...his remarkable characteristics immediately marked him out as no ordinary cleric. His riveting and unorthodox sermons raised the

¹⁰¹ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p57.

eyebrows of Rugby congregations, but most people gradually warmed to him." ¹⁰² Baillie was later to say of him, "From the moment of his ordination he was really miserable if he were not allowed to preach at least twice a Sunday. There was so much he wanted to say, so many thoughts bubbling up in his mind, that silence was a severe discipline." ¹⁰³

His pastoral work took him regularly to the poorer areas where he would debate issues of the day in pubs and tramps' accommodation. He presented even then a rather ridiculous figure, a small, rather loud Irishman dressed in black cassock, smoking cigarettes, always heard from a distance and recognised by his laugh and asthmatic cough. At Rugby his generosity came to be noticed and like his asthma, which would ultimately bring his life to a premature end, it would never leave him.

Mozley tells us, "In money matters he was hopeless - no half crown found it possible to remain in his pocket for more than a few hours. His friends rejoiced when his excellent housekeeper insisted on his handing all his money over to her, but even she could not prevent him giving away his clothes. Probably much of his giving was indiscriminate if not unwise, but he could not help giving: his heart was as big as his mind, and like his mind was always overflowing." ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p15.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Mozley JK, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1929. p61.

Two years later Kennedy was ordained a priest and he remained at Rugby for a further two years before in 1912 he returned to Leeds. He did so to help out his father who was tiring at the age of eighty seven. He was still working as the vicar at St. Mary's! Thus did Kennedy return to work amongst the slums in which he had been raised. The Leeds parish at Quarry Hill was one where a deep anti-clericalism had matured since the days of the Irish famine resulting in the mass immigration of starving and impoverished men and women. The Church it had seemed to them had said and done nothing. Purcell notes, "The river of indifference and hostility which some (chaplains) encountered for the first time in uniform in the first war and which Geoffrey and the Industrial Christian Fellowship were encountering in the twenties may well have risen far backwards in time in such wildernesses of the industrial scene as the Leeds of the preceding century, and there were many such."¹⁰⁵ Significantly, it was back at home that Kennedy met his future wife, Emily Catlow. They married in his father's church in early 1914 while Kennedy soldiered on ministering to the poor and running his 'Lads' clubs famous in that era.

Sadly, his father died in 1914 and the congregation asked Kennedy to stay on. The Bishop turned down this request and Kennedy was moved to a new area for both him and his new wife, Worcester. In Worcester, Kennedy disregarded more attractive parishes which were available to him and opted for St. Paul's "...because it has the smallest income and the poorest

¹⁰⁵ *ibid* p71.

people." ¹⁰⁶ His stipend was only £300 per annum. Kennedy quickly established himself amongst his new flock of four thousand souls. His generosity was immediately noticed not only by his parish, but also by Worcester's Dean at the time. Dr. William Moore Ede who would later write, "He was studiously careful to see that parish monies, donations and any gifts entrusted to him were used to the best possible advantage. He was often perplexed as to where funds were coming from to help the hundreds of people he had in his heart for every conceivable need, lifting up girls and women from moral falls, helping to educate promising children of poor parents, in emigrating families overseas, re-starting from ruin those who had failed. Except for his impulsive personal gifts, of which there are endless stories, he was wonderfully wise about disbursements. The proof is the large number of people who owe their stability, position and hope to his wise and timely help...Worcester knew Geoffrey as a model parish priest, beloved of his people and with a St. Francis-like generosity to the poor." ¹⁰⁷

In Worcester, the socio-economic situation was no different to the one that Kennedy faced in his earlier ministries. A vivid description of the harsh reality of it all was given by Seebom Rowntree when he says, "That in this land of abounding wealth, during a time of perhaps unexampled prosperity, probably more than one fourth of the population is living in

¹⁰⁶ Moore Ede W, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1929. p88.

¹⁰⁷ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p23.

poverty is a fact which may well cause great searchings of heart...The suffering may be all but voiceless, and we may long remain ignorant of its extent and severity, but when once we realise it we see that social questions of profound importance await solution." ¹⁰⁸

And so there was a co-existence of wealth and poverty and it was accepted by a great many. Kennedy's generosity therefore bucked a trend, in that, here was someone who did not accept poverty and gave of himself that it be eradicated. His theology was thus lived out; he proclaimed a suffering Christ who was with the poor, whether at the altar or in the streets.

St. Paul's liturgically was *high church*, which indeed suited Kennedy's emotional and artistic temperament. Kennedy enjoyed the richness of Anglo-Catholic ritual and the Eucharist was indeed the highlight and centre-point of all religious activity. He celebrated Mass daily. Purcell states, "The label (*high church*) thus affixed to him never altered. Even so, the point is not an important one. Geoffrey was at no time very interested in such matters, and was at all times violently impatient with those who were, driving through the trivia of church life, as an admirer once said of him during the war years, 'like a tank through barbed wire.' But he was very interested indeed, as one to whom beauty in all forms was the elixir of life, in the beauty of worship. He was very particular in such matters, and the forgetful carelessness

¹⁰⁸ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p83.

which afflicted both himself and his friends in other departments of life stopped well short of the actual conduct of worship, in which he was most particular." ¹⁰⁹

This is not to say however that his churchmanship was restricted to a church building. Even in Worcester times Kennedy was getting used to conducting services in the outdoors on top of packing cases. He preached in the streets, pubs, organised formal outdoor services, as well as leading inspired services at Evensong with a strong flavour for the dramatic. At all times this was done to bring home the message of the gospel and not for any form of personal adulation. He was treated as a father figure by the many children in the district and was remembered as such. George Cullis, one of these children, tells us that "...he would give us sixpence to buy tiger nuts and pomegranates at Andrew's fruit shop. He was also regularly to be seen visiting the poor houses in the area carrying half-a-crown's worth of groceries for the needy from Mrs. Hope's - a little shop in Park Street. He helped a lot of people out in those days." ¹¹⁰

It must be remembered then this harshness of life for many in the district. Many of the children wore no shoes and Kennedy revived a project which he had started when in Rugby, called a *ministry of boots*. Here he would have his congregation gather on the streets collecting any old boots and shoes which were

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* p62.

¹¹⁰ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p27.

going free, and his church folk would then dispense them amongst the needy.

Just as with Bonhoeffer at Finkenwalde seminary, when he developed ideas to prepare the young ordinands for their ministry, so Kennedy in his time at Worcester developed ideas on prayer which have a direct effect on how one lives the Christian way. He wrote in *The New Man in Christ*, a book posthumously edited by his Dean, these words. "When you pray like Jesus it is clear that you are not asking God to do things for you, you are asking God to give you the desire and the power to do things for him. That is a different story, isn't it? Jesus taught that there was no good thing which God does not desire to give us. The difficulty lies in preparing ourselves to receive, to appreciate, and to use rightly the gifts that he is striving to impart. The tragedy arises from the fact that God cannot give us more than we prepare ourselves to receive. There are in each and all of us unknown and immense capacities for good. We are, indeed, if we would only realise it, the sons of God. All the treasures of an infinite universe of goodness, truth and beauty are ours if we will set ourselves with single minds to seek the highest...The difficulty, according to Jesus, does not lie in persuading God to give; but in preparing ourselves to receive...The supreme question for us all is, what do you want? What do you love? And it is here that the Good Shepherd comes in to minister to our necessity - our necessity, let us repeat - comes in to give us not luxuries and extras, but comes in to give us what

we must have. If we pretend that we can do without it, we do but deceive ourselves...When a man tells me that he has no religion I simply take it that he is talking nonsense and proceed to find out what his religion is - what it is that gives meaning to him. What one generally discovers is that the man or woman has a god, but a poor one. And because he has a poor god, he is a poor person and is still in want, not knowing what he wants, but unhappy till he gets it." ¹¹¹

II.2 War!

Three months after Kennedy's arrival at St. Paul's, Worcester, the First World War broke out. Kennedy was to say in his parish magazine of the time, "Let us work and pray. It remains for us to keep a brave face, to shed tears in secret and wear our smiles in public, to be sober and chivalrous in victory, patient and steady in defeat." ¹¹²

Worcester soon became a large training establishment for the troops preparing for the front. Kennedy's talents were quickly put to good use by the church and his well known style of speech was soon being heard by up to 2,000 men, most of whom were often surprised by his unconventional approach. His Dean noted that, "Each time he went into the pulpit and spoke to those two thousand unwilling listeners, he held them spellbound - not a cough, no shuffling of feet. What he said

¹¹¹ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p86.

¹¹² Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p27.

became the main topic of conversation during the ensuing week." ¹¹³

Someone like Kennedy could not however be held back from going to the front and in November 1915, the Bishop of Worcester finally gave him permission to enlist as an Army Chaplain. By that Christmas he was celebrating Mass on an upturned box in a French village. Kennedy was to write at this time one of his first poems of the war, notably not to a wider audience, but rather to his wife.

"In the valleys down below,
Where the fairest flowers blow,
And the brooks run babbling nonsense to the sea,
Underneath the shady trees,
We two sauntered at our ease,
Just a pleasant little world for you and me.
Then the summons of the Lord,
Like a sudden silver sword,
Came and cut our world in two,
One fierce world of strife and hate,
One sad world where women wait,
And we wander far apart, dear, I and you." ¹¹⁴

Kennedy's view of the war, like most who had volunteered for service was one of excitement, fulfilment and a sense of

¹¹³ ibid p30.

¹¹⁴ ibid p33.

separation. Publicly, he wrote these words about it all in his parish magazine in September 1914, "I cannot say too strongly that I believe every able-bodied man ought to volunteer for service anywhere. There ought to be no shirking of that duty." ¹¹⁵ His first taste of the so-called *glory of service* was in Rouen, where he was chaplain at the train staging post to the front. Here many hundreds of troops would gather to prepare themselves for battle and have perhaps their last romantic and alcoholic encounter. It was a difficult place for a chaplain to work. Indeed all chaplains were forced now by their very situation to mix sometimes amongst the dregs of life.

Kennedy was to describe his experience at Rouen in this way, "I am chaplain to the troops quartered in the town, and it is sad because here is the old enemy one fights - sin - and sin is sadder than sorrow. Had I a boy I would pray that he might never be long at a base...". ¹¹⁶ The place was filled with brothels and drinking dens as one would expect, but what one perhaps fails to grasp (the many clergy who have never had the displeasure of it all), is the awfulness of these places where chaplains are often called to work. Men would queue in Kennedy's new parish for hours on end, simply to await sex, normally having drunk their last penny.

For many of the chaplains, the brutal environment of life

¹¹⁵ Moore Ede W, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1929. p99.

¹¹⁶ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p99.

behind the lines with the troops was completely unusual, as compared to a rural or middle class charge from whence they came. But for Kennedy, his Rouen environment was little different to what he had known before, and so he was at an advantage compared to many other chaplains because he largely repeated his style of ministry from Worcester. Mixing amongst the men in the canteen which he called his *mission hall*, he would raise weakened spirits by playing the piano and singing for them and with them.

Following the songs he would often deliver a Christian message which was not only profound but which captured the hearts of many a frightened soldier. His style was described by Private Frank Richards in this manner, "...he would launch out with a flow of language which on two occasions was very nearly the cause of us being turned out of the pubs we were in. By stop-tap he generally had thousands of native troops in one spittoon and thousands of parsons in the other."¹¹⁷ But it worked and when he died, Kennedy would be described as the 'fallen comrade' of these men and through him many would learn to live in a better way.

After Rouen, Kennedy would indeed move up to the Front and here he would be less excited and more saddened by the situation. He would come to realise, along with many a new Chaplain that with friendship comes difficult and open questions, one to the other, from which often the Vicar cannot

¹¹⁷ *ibid* p101.

give an answer or offer an escape. This would come on the fields of the Somme, where his theology of the cross would both be fully tested and would also give him greater sustenance than songs.

Thus in June 1916, Kennedy was posted as Padre to the 157th Brigade of the 46th Division. He would get there in time for the Battle of the Somme. The battle which started on 1 July is described by John Terraine as the worst day of the war for the British in terms of casualties against gains. He writes, "We all know - shall we ever be allowed to forget that 1 July 1916 was a bad day? In fact, it was one of the very worst in the Army's whole history - our casualties on that day were 57,470, of whom nearly 20,000 were dead, and the gains were small. It was a black day indeed. But surely that thing to remember is that it was unique - there was no other day like it - it was entirely abnormal, - a freak. 1 July 1916 was, of course, the first day of the Battle of the Somme; there were 141 more days to go - a grim, grinding business, during which the British Army made its acquaintance with the war of attrition which the French Army had been experiencing all that year. By the end of the Battle of the Somme the British losses were 415,000 which means that the daily rate of loss was 2,950. That was the norm - it compares with 4,070 a day in the 39 days of the Battle of Arras in 1917; 2,121 a day in the 105 days of 'Third Ypres', the Battle of Passchendaele; 3,645 a day in the 'hundred days' of the victorious offensive of 1918. These averages show how extraordinary that 1st July

in 1916 really was - a combination of mistakes at all levels and sheer bad luck." ¹¹⁸

Kennedy himself had three main periods of battle experience during the war. The first, as mentioned above, on the fields of the Somme, the second in 1917 with the 17th Brigade of the same Division at Messines Bridge and the third was in 1918 with 42nd Division. On the 18th July 1916, three weeks into the Battle of the Somme, Major-General Sir Archibald Paris, the Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval Division wrote, "The chief object is to kill and capture Boches which we are doing at a heavy cost. Of course we had hoped to be able to break through - at least some did, but I can't think there's much chance of that. It is all a question of killing a sufficient number of Boches - and if we can do it here, so much the better." ¹¹⁹

Brown notes, "Paris' comment is a highly significant one, in that it is essentially a voice of the second stage of the great four-month encounter which for the British dominated 1916: the Battle of the Somme. In effect he was enunciating the doctrine of attrition, the basic philosophy of which was that if the belligerent powers killed each other's men in equal numbers, the Allies would in the end be bound to win. (This concept would move from supposition to certainty after the United States entered the war in 1917.) In brief, the

¹¹⁸ Terraine J, *Leadership and War*, The Western Front Association. 1998. p50.

¹¹⁹ Brown M, *The Western Front*, Sidgwick and Jackson. 1993. p111.

argument was that huge losses could be accepted, so long as huge losses were inflicted." ¹²⁰

A new army was made old during the Somme. Kitchener's men were being blooded and learning their trade, as was Kennedy. Perhaps the most apt comment for our study from this dreadful battle comes from Private C. Bartram, 94th Trench Mortar Battery, who wrote, "From that moment all my religion died. All my teaching and beliefs in God had left me, never to return." ¹²¹

Such was the attitude Kennedy would face amongst some of the men, on top of all of the usual dangers. Purcell writes, "It was quite a lot. That it was not more was due, not to his own wish, but to the direction of the Deputy Chaplain General, Bishop Gwynne...Gwynne recognised in Geoffrey a very rare bird, and used him accordingly. The consequence was that, between his periods in the line, he was given a series of special postings. One would seem in the retrospect to have been a task of considerable difficulty - to wander through the whole army area speaking on behalf of one of the most curious enterprises ever undertaken by a Church in the middle of a war, the National Mission of Repentance and Hope. Another was to act as chaplain, at various times, to three Army Infantry Schools.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ Middlebrook M, *The First Day on the Somme*, Fontana/Collins. 1975. p316.

A third, the most extraordinary of all, saw him attached to a School for Physical and Bayonet Training, sometimes going on tour with a gruesome collection of morale-boosters which included a champion boxer, two wrestlers, and an N.C.O. whose title to fame was that he had killed eighteen Germans with a bayonet...What on earth does it all add up to? How could it be out of this mad medley of clowning and genius, of sentimentality and profound thought upon the sins and sufferings of man, out of an outward gaiety and an inwardly breaking heart, there should have emerged one of the most famous figures of that old war...How did it come that this man was able to make God real to so many to whom he seemed to be dead? How was it that, over and over again, the most unlikely people came, not only to love and remember him, but through him to get a glimpse of a splendour far beyond the customary horizons of ordinary life? Somewhere in the answer lies the secret at the heart of religion; but it is a secret he took with him, and nobody seems since to have possessed it." ¹²²

I think at this Kennedy himself would have laughed at his biographer. Purcell is over *sugary* here. Kennedy can be unpacked and we shall attempt this through a deeper investigation into his theology, which fuelled his pastoral care. This gave him a manifesto which quite remarkably he lived out. This was his greatness and his challenge to us today. To find a 'theology of chaplaincy', which means it can go with you wherever God calls you to work, whether it be in

¹²² Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p108.

the parish at Worcester or in the trenches.

And it was there, in the mud at the Front, that Kennedy would earn his nickname of 'Woodbine Willie' which had a good and bad side to it for him. In a poem he wrote about the name which he had been given, one can hear echoes of his frustration of his ability to do anything of supposed use. A frustration felt by many a Chaplain. He wrote,

"They gave me this name like their nature,

Compacted of laughter and tears,

A sweet that was born of the bitter,

A joke that was torn from the years.

Of their travail and torture, Christ's fools,

Atoning my sins with their blood,

Who grinned in their agony sharing

The glorious madness of God.

Their name! Let me hear it - the symbol

Of unpaid - unpayable debt.

For the men to whom I owed God's Peace,

I put off with a cigarette." ¹²³

Kennedy having now gained increased operational experience discovered that his philosophy and attitude to what chaplaincy is, or should be, deepened and formulated. He wrote, "Live with the men, go where they go, make up your mind that you will share all their risks, and more, if you can do any good. You can take it that the best place for a padre is where there

¹²³ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p42.

is the most danger of death. Our first job is to go beyond the men in self-sacrifice and reckless devotion. Don't be bamboozled into believing that your proper place is behind the lines - it isn't." ¹²⁴

As an explanation of his ministry he would write, "Take a box of fags in your haversack, and a great deal of love in your heart, and go with them, live with them, talk with them. You can pray with them sometimes, but pray FOR them always." ¹²⁵

1917 was a dramatic year for Kennedy. In the middle of the year he won the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack on Messines Ridge. He was involved in heavy fighting, tending to the wounded and dying, and at one point he had to cross dangerous ground to fetch a supply of morphine from the dressing station. He returned with the morphine only to do another trip, and he then managed to recover two men who faced certain death. Following his experience at Messines Ridge, Kennedy met DF Carey, the Assistant Chaplain General and told him, "You know, this business has made me less cocksure of much of which I was cocksure before. On two points I am certain: Christ and his Sacrament. Apart from that I am not certain of anything." ¹²⁶

Such experiences undoubtedly shake any thinking human being's faith and theology. What was the good of it all one could ask

¹²⁴ *ibid* p44.

¹²⁵ *ibid* p45.

¹²⁶ Carey DF, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1929. p154.

amongst the bombs, madness and death? Where and what was God doing about it? Purcell states, "There were various ways of dealing with such awkward questions, of course. One was to be genuinely unaware that they existed. Another was to be aware, but to rely upon the tough hide of institutional religion to turn aside such shafts. A third way was to face them. Geoffrey chose the third. The result was to draw from him memorable answers, 'the ruminations of an incurably religious man under battle conditions' as he once called them." ¹²⁷

Kennedy's poetry began to flourish and it was to make him famous. Three of his poems so impressed the Chaplain General that they were printed by SPCK and distributed throughout the Front. His poetry reflected his now bitter hatred of the war. This is hardly surprising remembering what he had been through. At the Somme and Messines he had been party to the burial of hundreds of men on, at times a daily basis. Interestingly in 1916, his letters home following the Somme had all but dried up, to be replaced by poetry.

II.3 Woodbine Willie's Theology through Verse at War

Following the action at Messines Ridge, Kennedy was to write,

"I remember how I reached them,
Dripping wet and all forlorn,
In the dim and dreary twilight
Of a weeping summer morn.

¹²⁷ *ibid* p114.

All that week I'd buried brothers,
In one bitter battle slain,
In one grave I laid two hundred.
God! What sorrow and what rain!
And that night I'd been in the trenches,
Seeking out the sodden dead,
And just dropping them in shell-holes,
With a service swiftly said.
'For the bullets rattled round me,
But I couldn't leave them there,
Water-soaked in flooded shell-holes,
Reft of common Christian prayer." ¹²⁸

The *National Mission of Repentance and Hope* of 1916, as we have noted earlier, was about a renewal of Christian commitment within the nation. The building of the New Jerusalem fell upon all clergy, but especially those amongst the troops. They would bring Christ's rallying call of a renewed faith. Whilst many have identified the *mission* as a failure, for our study it is of interest, if only because it was then whilst working for it that Kennedy had time to write his now famous *Rough Rhymes*. This collection of dialect poetry, along with his book *The Hardest Part* were written during his war service. His work was in much demand amongst the men.

A Sermon in a Billet, was the beginning of Kennedy's dialect

¹²⁸ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p50.

poems for which he was to become famous,

"(John Bull is the person of Horatio Bottomley who spoke out against the National Mission and it's ideas of necessary repentance of the men.)

Our padre says I'm a sinner, and John Bull say I'm a saint,

And both of 'em's sure to be liars, for I'm neither of 'em, I ain't;

I'm a man, an' a man's a mixture, right from 'is very birth,

For part of 'im comes from 'eaven, and part of 'im comes from earth.

Ther's nothing in man that's perfect, and nothing that's all complete,

He's nobbut a big beginning, from 'is 'ead to the soles of 'is feet." ¹²⁹

The importance of Kennedy's rhyme was one of communication, a problem which we shall see was tackled in Bonhoeffer's search for a *non-religious language*. With Kennedy's rhyme, we can watch him make natural steps towards a language which the common man and woman could understand and yet it maintained a theological and biblical integrity.

Purcell writes of this importance, "But to the Divine it matters (communication) tremendously. His business is essentially with the souls of all men - not of a small

¹²⁹ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p129.

proportion which happens to be sufficiently literate as to understand what he is talking about. No church can afford to go on indefinitely talking to itself once it has become concerned with meaning and no longer largely dependent upon mystery. The mediaeval worshipper did not have to understand the Latin mutter of the Mass. The mutter itself was enough. But once the Scriptures and the language of worship has been translated into the vernacular the question of meaning arises. Obviously, the language in which the broad truths of religion can be communicated to the mass of people varies from age to age. Nobody appears in the present, for instance, to have found the secret as regards the millions of secondary-modern educated citizenry with its television background. And certainly Geoffrey's dialect verses would scarcely have meant much to the more sophisticated soldiery of the second war. But the men he had in mind and heart were of a very different sort, for the most part the simple working-men...The dialect he used was truly their speech. The sentimentality was truly of their very being. Not surprisingly, the *Rough Rhymes* swept through the armies in France and the peoples at home like a fire; burning some; warming many." ¹³⁰

Here is a strong connection to Bonhoeffer's later pleading for a Christian language which would keep the Gospel at its heart and yet could be spoken, without fear and so be understood. The key was that the language could only be learnt in France

¹³⁰ *ibid* p130.

amidst the mud. It was their language, for them. The challenge for the church today is to find the language of our own un-churched.

The central tenet of all Kennedy's rhymes was God's suffering with mankind. *The Sorrows of God*, encapsulates such thought,

"I wonder if that's what it really means,
That figure what 'angs on the Cross.
I remember I seed one the other day
As I stood with the Captain's 'oss...
Well, what if 'e came to the earth today,
Came walking about this trench,
'Ow 'is 'eart would bleed for the sights 'e seed
I' the mud and the blood and the stench.
And I guess it would finish 'im up for good
When 'e came to this old sap end,
And 'e seed that bundle o' nothen there,
For 'e wept at the grave uv 'is friend." ¹³¹

Kennedy's honesty broke some unspoken rules of theological reflection, bursting it out of the stained glass windowed, middle class church and putting it amongst the realities of life for so many. He spoke of harlots and their lot with the men, concluding that they would be before many when it came to entrance into God's Kingdom. Not much it seemed had changed from his early sermons as a curate.

¹³¹ *ibid* p131.

Purcell writes, "It was all most uncomfortable, most startling. And yet it was incredibly satisfying to the many who had longed to be able to see where, if at all, Christ was to be found in the horrors which had come upon the world. The answer appeared to be that he was to be found in the most unexpected places:

"Easy does it-bit o' trench 'ere,
Mind that blinkin' bit o' wire,
There's a shell 'ole on your left there,
Lift 'im up a little 'igher...
'Ere we are now, stretcher-case, boys,
Bring 'im aht a cup o' tea !
Inasmuch as ye have done it
Ye have done unto me." ¹³²

Men had to cope with the guilt of killing, others with behaviour of which they were not proud. At home the women had to cope with tragic loss and inevitable poverty. The world for many had lost its innocence. But Kennedy did not leave it there, he searched for theological answers in his rhymes and they were expressed at greater length in his book *The Hardest Part*. Two themes emerge from it as a form of answer, both are about a renewal of genuine prayer and sacramentalism. He wrote, "Too often we model our prayers upon the false interpretation of Gethsemane. Our prayers are too often

¹³² *ibid* p132.

either a wail of agony or a kind of indent upon God for supplies to meet our needs, with 'Thy Will be done' put in at the end in case God cannot take away the pain or grant us the supplies, 'Thy Will be done' ceases to be the great prayer, and becomes the necessary apology for praying. It becomes an act of passive submission instead of an act of positive and powerful aspiration...We have taught people to use prayer too much as a means of comfort...the comfort of the cushion, not the comfort of the Cross. Because we have failed in prayer to bear the Cross, we have also failed to win the crown." ¹³³

And so, as we will find with Bonhoeffer, there is a necessary resurgence and maintenance of the (arcane) discipline of prayer. Certainly neither man here can be accused of popularising religion to attract the masses. A theology of the cross is hard. Kennedy thus writes of prayer that it is "...the means of communication by which the suffering and triumphant God meets his band of volunteers and pours his spirit into them, and sends them out to fight, to suffer, and to conquer in the end." ¹³⁴

Grundy says, "He was to explain his theological thinking in a very lengthy essay *God and Prayer* in his book *The Hardest Part*. Two short extracts perhaps give an insight;

War is just sin in a million forms, in a million of

¹³³ *ibid* p137.

¹³⁴ *ibid* p138.

God's gifts misused. God cannot deal with war in any other way than that by which He deals with sin. He cannot save us from war except by saving us from sin. How does God deal with sin? By way of the Cross, the way of love. He suffers for it. He takes it upon himself, and He calls on us to share His burden, to partake of his suffering.

And in the end, through prayer and the army of those that pray, God will reach down to the roots of war and tear them from the world. When at last through prayer the stream of the Spirit has flowed out of all, men will look upon their guns, their bombs, their gas cylinders as mad monstrosities, and will take the metal from the earth to mould and beat it, not into engines of death, but into means of beauty and of life." ¹³⁵

There is no apology here for his belief. The victory is the cross, this is the Christian ethic. This is the Alpha and Omega. For Kennedy, it was also his strongest belief that through the cross all would be communicated to. This is best expressed in his poem *The Suffering God*, here he writes,

"Peace does not mean the end of all our striving
Joy does not mean the drying of our tears;
Peace is the power that comes to souls arriving
Up to the light where God Himself appears." ¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p51.

¹³⁶ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1962, p140.

The other answer he found along with prayer was as mentioned before, sacramental. His thoughts upon the matter are such,

"I wonder if we have not made the Sacrament an end in itself rather than a means to an end, the great end of Christ-like life. It has seemed to the man in the street that we were trying to persuade him that regular and frequent attendance at this service would of itself avail to save his soul, and secure him entry into heaven hereafter. We have failed to connect the Sacrament with life...Of course, in theory we are just as much opposed to magic and mechanical religion as he is; but in practice we sail close to it...The Churches tend to become ends in themselves...We have been calling men to services when what they wanted was the call to service." ¹³⁷

And so he pleads;

"God, turn the Church from an ambulance into an army, and make it really militant upon earth. Do we love God? Do we love the suffering God, and do we want to suffer with him? Do we find him in the Sacrament? Ritual does not matter. They are not essentials. Nothing really matters but the love of God in Christ." ¹³⁸

The Sacrament is thus a servant of God in Christ. It is the

¹³⁷ *ibid* p149.

¹³⁸ *ibid* p150.

appointed method of the church, for her to gather around the table and renew her commitment to her God. But it is the end and not the beginning which matters. Again the maintenance of genuine sacramentalism, even amongst a small army of faithful is the fruit which feeds the church for Kennedy, much as we shall see for Bonhoeffer.

It is worth remembering that Kennedy wrote *The Hardest Part* during the war. It is founded in pastoral experiences from the Front and attempts some kind of answer. He is aware of the paradox of a crucified and yet triumphant God. He is aware of the risk in following this line, for this God may appear weak and defeated. His triumph is death and yet life. But like Bonhoeffer, *only the suffering God can help*. There is no especial appeal to magic and superstition, just a call to service.

Christ for Kennedy may also be a product of man's imagination, he writes,

"I lost my Lord and sought him long
I journeyed far, and cried
His name to every wandering wind
But still my Lord did hide...
I sought him where the hermit kneels
And tells his beads of pain.
I found him with some children here
In this green Devon lane.

How do I know that God is good? I don't.

I gamble like a man. I bet my life

Upon one side in life's great war -

That's it. Doubt's very soul of doubt

Lies here. Is God just faith in God,

Or can God work his will without

Our human faith?" ¹³⁹

What strikes us strongly is the human-ness and again honesty in Kennedy's thought. Perhaps this is the greatest attraction to his work? A nation sought answers, if not at the door of the church or vicarage, certainly in the quiet of their homes. And buy his books they did in great numbers, for he was seen by many as their Padre. He was with them at war and what's more he tried to speak to and for them. He was affected, just as the God who died on Calvary was affected and of whom he spoke constantly to others.

All search for answers ended back up on the cross, with its subsequent triumph for him. All are formulated because of the war. He was to write, "The brutality of war is literally unutterable - there are no words foul or filthy enough to describe it. War is a universal disaster." ¹⁴⁰ Grundy writes, "His indictment of this crime against humanity was so brilliant and savagely crystallised in his short but potent

¹³⁹ *ibid* p141.

¹⁴⁰ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*. Osborne Heritage. 1997. p35.

verse entitled *Waste*;

Waste of Muscle, waste of Brain,
Waste of Patience, waste of Pain,
Waste of Manhood, waste of Health,
Waste of Beauty, waste of Wealth,
Waste of Blood, and waste of Tears,
Waste of Youth's most precious years,
Waste of ways the Saints have trod,
Waste of Glory, waste of God -
War!" ¹⁴¹

Kennedy's over riding thought on the Great War by the time of his writings, was like everyone else, a longing for peace. Gone were his days of enthusiasm for a just cause, which he no longer believed in. What upheld him throughout was that any hope which mankind had left lay solely in the suffering God who, as we have mentioned before, grieved with man in his time of trial.

II.4 War No More!

Kennedy returned to Worcester with these words on leaving the Army: "When I went to war I believed that it would end to the benefit of mankind. I believed that a better order was coming for the ordinary man and, God help me, I believe it still. But it is not through war that this order will be brought

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

about. There are no fruits of victory, no such things as victory in modern war. War is a universal disaster, and as far as I am concerned I'm through." ¹⁴²

Kennedy would only remain in Worcester for three more years, his fame by this time as *Woodbine Willie* had spread and he would move on to a wider calling. During these three years he was in constant demand to write and speak. From ex-servicemen's clubs to Buckingham Palace, he would go to preach. In 1920, *Rough Talks by a Padre* was published and it encapsulated the questions he would attempt to answer in his writings and through his many public appearances. He wrote, "Why aren't all the best chaps Christians?...That's what bothers me and makes me think." ¹⁴³

Kennedy at this time was held in high regard by many, indeed from King George V, who appointed him as a Royal Chaplain, to the simple working man in the street. In a conversation the monarch once had with Kennedy's wife at a palace garden party, she was asked if her husband had accompanied her, "'No,' she replied 'he's speaking in the Isle of Man.' This brought lavish tribute from the King: 'How that man works - what an asset to the nation'." ¹⁴⁴ And Kennedy did work to bring his message of the suffering God from his poems to all people and society.

¹⁴² *ibid* p56.

¹⁴³ Kennedy GAS, *Rough Talks by a Padre*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1920. p201.

¹⁴⁴ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p69.

In 1921 Kennedy resigned his position as parish priest at St. Paul's and he would move to a full-time position as a missionary for the Industrial Christian Fellowship, whom he had spent much time supporting in his last year at St. Paul's. The early twenties were a time of disillusionment for many, as is revealed by Kennedy's words above. The hope that the war had made a difference to the ordinary man who fought in it, proved fruitless. CFG Masterman in his book *England After War*, describes the time as "...one of complete disillusion and disgust: of hatred of the old men who have sent the young to die..." ¹⁴⁵ The church did not escape criticism. Kennedy however was one of the few voices from within who were listened to by ordinary folk. He had been there and he shared their pain.

Kennedy had a burning desire to speak and write, to answer many of the questions ordinary people were struggling with. Practically, working as a missionary for the Industrial Christian Fellowship would give him such an opportunity. Perhaps this was part of his healing process? He was thinking out aloud many of his ideas; why was there such poverty, was there a political solution? Two books duly arrived to tackle such issues between 1919 - 1922, when he was still a parish priest in Worcester. They both reveal Kennedy's state of mind and thought at this time. They were *Lies* and *Food for the Fed Up*.

¹⁴⁵ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p155.

Kennedy explained the mood of himself and of the nation after the war, in his introduction to *Lies*: "It is an unsatisfactory business this book. I feel rather like a man driven desperate by midges on a summer's day. This post-war world is black with lies - biting and buzzing round everything...I can smell hell. If only men could smell once more the lilies that grew by the empty tomb! They must - they are there. In the future there must be not death, but Resurrection. Get to work and bury the Dead - bury the dead, and make room for the living. There are too many lies." ¹⁴⁶

Much of this book would indeed be read with the knowledge that the author, along with the majority of his readers were suffering from what we now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Kennedy's therapy was his writing wherein he exorcised many bad spirits from the war. But there was much more to the book than simply a cry of outrage from the author. Within the book Kennedy outlines his basic belief in what Christianity is and how it can help. He states that, "The Christian religion is, and has always been, the simplest thing in all the world - a passionate devotion to Jesus Christ. A passionate devotion to Jesus Christ as a person, not of the past but of the present, not among the dead but among the living; to Jesus Christ as an ever-present Comrade, Captain, Guide, and God; as a Comrade clinging closer than a brother; as a Guide, the one thing certain in a world of vast uncertainties; and as a God, the supreme expression of the

¹⁴⁶ Kennedy GAS, *Lies*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1919. pix.

final truth - 'the very lineage of the Father - Through whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that has been made'...All sects and all ages of real Christians, however much theologies have differed, have really been at one with this, their love and their devotion to the ever-present Christ." ¹⁴⁷

Kennedy returned from the war unsure of much which he had previously held true within Church and society, what he would attack as *lies* in this book. The war was a crime against humanity and the church taught a theology which offered little answers to difficult questions. Kennedy wrote, "Trouble is...a popular theology which is taught in schools, preached from pulpits, talked in the street, and which forms the background of peoples minds - is keeping thousands of men from the religion of Jesus Christ...There is no doubt that we clergy are enormously responsible for this." ¹⁴⁸ Kennedy claimed that half truths were taught and that only now with these half truths being unmasked as such, before the common humanity of the British 'Tommy' and his family following the war, could the truth now be revealed. The 'Truth' which Kennedy proclaimed was that, "Faith does not mean that we cease from asking questions; it means that we ask and keep on asking until the answer comes; that we seek and keep on seeking until the truth is found; that we knock and keep on knocking until the door is opened and we enter into the palace

¹⁴⁷ *ibid* p132.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid* p138.

of God's truth." ¹⁴⁹ The 'Truth' then for Kennedy is a Job like experience of enlightenment which commends difficult questions being asked, questions which he of course was familiar with from the trenches. He writes, "What is God like - What is He like? What do you mean when you say He is Almighty?...That is the question which has been torturing the minds of millions during this war; we cannot simply take things on trust - war is wrong, 'filthy', My brethren, the ways of God, No man can understand." ¹⁵⁰

So for Kennedy in *Lies*, the only way into truth is through honest questions being answered honestly by the church. Here as we shall see, we find striking similarities with Bonhoeffer's cry for honest debate by the church over questions being asked of her in his letters from prison in 1944. Kennedy states, "We cannot, I am afraid, accomplish that task of reconstruction without doing a great deal of destruction first...The men who will not tear down what truth itself condemns is a coward and a traitor to the God he serves..." ¹⁵¹ Theologically, Kennedy's attack is upon the liberal theology of the 'Trouble is' theologians, as he describes them, but the book does not deal with theological specifics. Indeed, he admits that he has little time for theology on the whole because it is largely destructive towards the Christian faith. He does however strike out at the structures which uphold such theology, again like

¹⁴⁹ *ibid* p151.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid* p144.

¹⁵¹ *ibid* p140

Bonhoeffer.

He writes, "The men of vision cannot think of privilege except of another name for responsibility; wealth to them means work for others, and position a chance of wider service. The man-made barriers 'twixt man and man that split us into sections, they look at with far-seeing eyes, and find to be absurd. When you think of men as sons of God...the only thing that matters is that they are men." ¹⁵² Bonhoeffer interestingly, like Kennedy, also insisted upon a strong Christological and incarnational faith. True being for both men was a participation in life as Christ lived it then and continues to live it through His Spirit in us now. Christ was our true 'Comrade' and came to many men through their own regimental comrades in the trenches noted Kennedy. This participation with Christ resulted in service towards mankind, not 'lording' it over them. Kennedy developed this thought more systematically in his next book *Food for the Fed Up*, when he looked at revising the creeds within his new *Kingdom Vernacular* thought structure. This is again very similar to the way Bonhoeffer's *non-religious interpretation* was leading him, for at the end of his 'short outline' for a book in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, he too felt compelled in the light of a new interpretation to re-examine the creeds. Kennedy unlike Bonhoeffer however got the chance to write that book.

¹⁵² *ibid* p265.

Purcell describes *Food for the Fed Up*, as Kennedy's best book of his post-war years. Within it Kennedy goes through the Creed, clause by clause, in a determined, yet honest apologetic for the masses, the *fed up*. He wrote honestly, saying, "The creeds are no more complete statements of truth than a soldier's love letter from the front was a complete statement of his love...That is what creeds and dogmas are - ridiculous as expressions, but wonderful as symbols...Poetry does not say what it means: it hints at it. So do creeds. They are absurd as statements, but superb as symbols." ¹⁵³

Food for the Fed-up spoke about a future for its readers. This was important at a time of great poverty and strife within the country. Would things ever improve? What did the war achieve for the ordinary man? Kennedy replied that progress will come, for progress comes from the power of an empty tomb. He wrote that the Christian can "...still believe, because the centre of his Faith is a crucifix, behind which stands a tomb that is empty. He need not cut down his hopes for humanity at large to very modest and humble aspirations...He can believe that we have a millennium to look forward to, and that the Kingdom of God is at hand. The idea of progress in and through Christ is, I believe the most powerful and man-moving reality in the world to-day, and I believe that we have in Christ a rational right to look upwards and onwards to see the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven adorned as a bride for her husband. That is our

¹⁵³ Kennedy GAS, *Food for the Fed Up*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1921. p20.

objective." ¹⁵⁴

The book itself sets out clearly how the Apostles' Creed can be applied in Kennedy's time. Sermon-like in delivery, it is written with a gentle, yet proselytising flair. Which of course was its purpose, for Kennedy was still a best selling author. When tackling the subject *Dead and Buried*, characteristically Kennedy speaks honestly saying, "The Cross is a challenge. What does it mean? What did He mean for men? What did He save them from? How did He save them? Why did His death save them? What do you mean by being washed in the blood of the Lamb? We have got to ask these questions, we have got to seek an answer. Men have always asked them and always sought for answers, and there has never been a satisfying one yet. It is no good trying to pretend that there has been one consistent Christian answer, because there never has been...It is impossible to make a seamless robe out of the patchwork quilt of Christian theology, impossible to make a consistent whole out of this multitude of conflicting theories. Yet they all have some common features: they all start and are based upon the doctrine of the Fall of Man." ¹⁵⁵

Kennedy places the current situation in the light of this historical fact. Evil came in reality into the world and man now having the freedom to choose, chooses evil. But Kennedy states that we moderns can no longer conceive of such a day as

¹⁵⁴ *ibid* pxiv.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* p208.

this in history. A time, in the light of evolutionary theories, which can still allow for an Eden before the Fall. We cannot believe that we are now in such a state because humankind rejected God in a moment of history. He writes, "We cannot believe that but for that first sin the progress of man would have been an orderly and painless advance to perfection. History - the history of man - is too painfully parallel with the struggle among the beasts for us to believe that all its chaos was due to wilful rebellion. Partly it must always have been due, as it is now, to man's imperfection, his ignorance of truth, for which he is only partly responsible. The chaos of human history, like the chaos of human misery, is partly due to sin, and partly to childish ignorance for which neither the children nor their parents are wholly to blame. Looked at in this light, the whole vision of God is different. We no longer sit in a law court and listen to a great Judge proclaiming a sentence of just doom upon sinful man; we see rather a great Poet wrestling to express Himself in His poem, with all the mingled joy and sorrow, the success through constant failure, of the creative mind at work; we see rather a great Father striving to create perfect sons, and suffering always for their ignorance and sin; we see a great Life-force breaking through into a new form of life, and suffering agonies to give that new form of life permanence and strength." ¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ *ibid* p217.

Man has always misused his freedom, to a greater or lesser extent, thus God the creator must necessarily be the Redeemer if He is to act as a loving Father. This burden was borne by God down through the centuries and is recorded throughout the pages of the Old Testament, culminating with the New Testament proclamation of God's very own suffering and sacrifice upon the cross. Thus Kennedy writes, "There has always been a Crucifix in Heaven's heart of hearts...It is not that He died, but that He rose again; it is not the Death, but the life, the unconquerable and insuperable Life, that becomes to us the important point." ¹⁵⁷ For Kennedy our own salvation is achieved by this action of God, through our own partaking in His Life, His existence in us through faith. It is the Spirit of the living God, living in mankind which offers hope for Kennedy. The fact that Jesus was raised means He can live in us and through Him we have life. Atonement is the climax of incarnation for Kennedy. All things must now be interpreted in the light and knowledge of this risen Christ.

Kennedy thus concludes, "And now to me the whole thing becomes simple; I know where I am. To begin with, I know what God is like, He is revealed to me in the Life of Jesus. God, Who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, has shined into my heart to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, and that is my greatest need satisfied; I know Him in Whom I have believed. There is no Great Unknown, no Veiled Being, to Whose inscrutable

¹⁵⁷ *ibid* p219.

judgments I must perforce submit, even when they violate my sense of right and wrong. God is like Jesus...I have the vision of the great creative Father with Whom I seek to be at one, and I know that the only possible reason I have for expecting that I can be at one with Him is that there is in me something of the Spirit of Jesus, something of His Divinely perfect humanity. It is not mine, and it is not me, it is a gift from God, a gift which comes to me through His Cross, and through His Saints, through His martyrs, and His Church...Thus I find the very heart of the Christian Faith and cast away its husk. God is revealed to me in Christ, and I can know Him as He is, and in that growing knowledge find Eternal Life. The only trouble that I have left is that the shadow of those old beliefs, those ancient fears, the shadow of the awful Judge and of His dreadful justice, lies over the liturgies and forms of service that I am obliged to use; the atmosphere of the fairy tale still is within the Church, and I have to spend so much of my time explaining that the words of the Prayer Book do not mean what they say, but something different, and it all seems to be such a waste of time." ¹⁵⁸

Kennedy claimed this new way of thinking was the only way to reconcile the bewildering theories of Atonement which encapsulate the fiery and judgemental God of the Old Testament with the God of the New. Once again, and as a precursor to Bonhoeffer, he must locate truth in and through the person of Christ and in and through His suffering, death and ultimately

¹⁵⁸ *ibid* p223.

through His resurrection, within whose power those of faith stand. As we shall note, like Bonhoeffer, the Old Testament must now be interpreted in the light of the New Testament, indeed it should for Kennedy be read as the poem of interaction between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, with all of creation. In and only through this way can truth be found Kennedy claimed.

This would be the last attempt Kennedy would make at writing a form of systematic theology. In 1921, *Democracy and the Dog Collar* was published, re-iterating Kennedy's dislike from *Lies* that the time for the church, as organised religion peddling half truths, was over. He wrote, "Organised Christianity is a failure, but then organised anything is a failure."¹⁵⁹ The main theme of the book however was to discuss the lack of relations between the worker and hence the general British labour force, with the church. Kennedy concluded that the church must move out from the church and into the street. This of course mimicked what he himself was setting out to do and he became embroiled in the practical side of life that year with his work as a missionary with the Industrial Christian Fellowship. Inevitably all his writings now to follow took on a far more practical and social theme.

Kennedy was driven to this because he sought material change for the country, this was part of his theology and faith structure rather than one which had any political agenda. The

¹⁵⁹ Kennedy GAS, *Democracy and the Dog Collar*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1921. p21.

roots of such change are attributed by many to Kennedy's war experiences. However, the truth lies well back in the time in his father's parish in Leeds where he first learnt of the needs of the poor and disenfranchised. The effect of the war was that he was like many a survivor, bitter about the waste of young lives and was disgusted with those who had sent them to their deaths.

On behalf of these men he issued an appeal to the nation to welcome back the survivors stating, "I am persuaded that it is a tremendous opportunity, born of England's agony, which we must take or be traitors to a trust - the most awful trust ever put in the hands of a Christian nation. Thousands who never thought of religion before are groping after the Truth. We must make them hear, through the agony of the nation, the call of Christ. Everything depends on how England receives home the survivors of this awful conflict. The war will not do it by itself, but it is a great chance - a great chance if Christian people at home will take it." ¹⁶⁰

Grundy tells us, "Studdert Kennedy, from this time on, was to be influenced by a driving force clearly reflected in a passage from one of his essays: 'God, turn the Church from an ambulance into an army, and make it militant upon earth.' Part of one of his lengthy poems, *Non Angli Sed Angeli*, masterfully reflects his deep concern for the social fabric of post-war Britain:

¹⁶⁰ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p58.

'O England, when this wave of war is spent,
And rolls back baffled from thy rocky breast,
Wilt thou be strong to slay the Minotaur,
And strangle that great golden snake that crept
In time of Peace about thy home to kill,
With venom of low greed and lust of wealth,
The soul of Freedom and the heart of Love?
Shall wealth still grow, and woe increase to breed
In filthy slums the slaves of poverty?
Shall senseless pride and vulgar luxury
By gilding over evil make it good?
Shall souls be only hands again, dead hands,
That toil for wealth that makes none rich save those
Who need it not? Shall men still seek in drink
A refuge from the burden of their strife,
And from that dull monotony of grey,
That shadows half our cities from the sun?" ¹⁶¹

Dr. W. Moore Ede, Kennedy's Dean at Worcester said, "He went to the war as to a holy crusade which by victory would vindicate righteousness, but he returned hating the wickedness and folly of war. He became an apostle for peace and a tireless fighter in the economic war." ¹⁶²

Kennedy wrote a poem called *The Pensioner* which reflected the fundamental trauma war could cause on his parishioners:

¹⁶¹ *ibid* p58.
¹⁶² *ibid* p59.

"Im and me was kids together,
Played together, went to school,
Where Miss Jenkins used to rap us
On our knuckles wiv a rule.
When we left we worked together,
At the fact'ry, mak'in jam,
Gawd 'ave mercy on us women!
I'm full up today - I am.
Well I minds the August Monday,
When 'e said 'e loved me true,
Underneath the copper beach tree
With the moonbeams shining through.
Then we walked down by the river,
Silent-like and 'and in 'and,
Till we came there by the Ketch Inn,
Where them two big willows stand.
There 'e caught me roughly to 'im,
And 'is voice was 'oarse and wild,
As 'e whispered through 'is kisses,
'Will ye mother me my child?
An I took and kissed and kissed 'im,
Sweet as love and long as life,
Vowed while breath was in my body
I would be 'is faithful wife.
An' I seemed to see 'is baby,
Smiling as 'e lay at rest,
With 'is tiny 'and a-clutching
At the softness of my breasts.

Gawd above, them days was 'eaven
I can see the river shine
Like a band of silver ribbon
And I can feel 'is 'and in mine.
I can feel them red 'ot kisses
On my lips or on my 'air,
I can feel 'is arm tight round me,
Gawd! I tell you it ain't fair.

Look ye what the war's done at 'im,
Lying there still as death.
See 'is mouth all screwed and twisted,
With the pain of drawing breath!
But of course I 'ave a pension,
Coming reg'lar every week.
So I ain't got much to grouse at -
I suppose it's like my cheek,
Grousin' when a grateful country,
Buys my food and pays my rent.
I should be most 'umbly grateful
That my John was one as went,
Went to fight for King and Country,
Like a 'ero and a man.
I should be most 'umbly grateful,
And just do as best I can.

But my pension won't buy kisses,

And he'll never kiss again,
'E ain't got no kissin' in 'im,
Ain't got nothin' now - but pain.
Not as I would ever change 'im
For the strongest man alive.
While breath is in my body
Still I'll mother 'im and strive
That I keeps my face still smiling,
Though my 'eart is fit to break.
As I lives a married widow,
So I'll live on for 'is sake,
But I says - Let them as makes 'em
Fight their wars and mourn their dead,
Let their women sleep for ever
In a loveless, childless bed.
No - I know - it ain't right talkin',
But there's times as I am wild,
Gawd! you dunno 'ow I wants it -
'Ow I wants - a child - 'is child." ¹⁶³

Such thoughts, driven by his central theology of the cross, would bring Kennedy into some controversy. In the Spring of 1921, he designed a new war memorial¹⁶⁴, to be placed outside his church. It was a sculpture of the crucifixion, but with head raised in triumph, rather than lowered in defeat and

¹⁶³ *ibid* p61.

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly when you visit Kennedy's memorial it still stands, if looking rather worn. It is hard now to imagine the scandal which the memorial would cause over the form of the crucifix, even reaching the pages of *The Telegraph*. The church building and memorial itself is now owned by an evangelical church.

death. This symbol expresses the theology previously mentioned and was highlighted in a verse of poetry,

"God, the God I love and worship,
reigns in sorrow on the Tree,
Broken, bleeding but unconquered,
Very God of God to me." ¹⁶⁵

From 1921, Kennedy's work with the *Fellowship* was based on the organisation's mission to offer a wider embassy of goodwill among the trades and industries of our land. From 1921-1928, Kennedy would take his rather unorthodox style of ministry on a tour of Britain and abroad, protesting social and trade injustice and seeking Christian values within economic circles.

As the Chief Missioner for the *Fellowship*, Kennedy was listened to by large numbers, mostly the same types who had always heard him before. One ICF worker explained his abilities at this time in this way, "No-one who worked with him ever forgot the urgency of the crowds by which he was surrounded in the cities and the squares, nor the vast length and eagerness of the queues that waited to get into his mass meetings." ¹⁶⁶ Peter Kirk (his boss within ICF) said, "He had a great intellect, but an even greater heart. His passionate concern for the down-and-outs has probably done more to arouse the public conscience than all the endless discussions in

¹⁶⁵ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p66.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid* p74.

Parliament could ever do; for he taught by example..." ¹⁶⁷

Kennedy also became the part-time Rector of St. Edmond's Church, London and though the church only had a few parishioners, people would flock on a Sunday to hear him preach twice a month. Domestically, his family now contained three children and they remained in their own property in Worcester and Kennedy commuted home as often as was possible. Work however was slowly beginning to wear him down.

His ministry with the *Fellowship* involved him in the General Strike of 1926 and also the long miners' strike which finished in the same year. Grundy describes the situation for Kennedy as such, "For a man of his social conscience, these were truly painful events." ¹⁶⁸ His Chief at ICF described it this way, "He spent night after night pacing up and down in my study, talking of the distresses of the miners and the problem of the unemployed, and the means that might be found for improving the conditions of the men, women and little children whose lot was unfortunate through no fault of their own." ¹⁶⁹ Kennedy gave a personal gift to the Miners' Distress Fund for £200. His generosity remained with him.

Four books came out of Kennedy's time with the *Fellowship*. *The Wicket Gate*, *The Word and the Work*, *The Woman and the Christ* and his only novel *I Pronounce Them*. These books

¹⁶⁷ Kirk PTR, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1969. p168.

¹⁶⁸ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p77.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*.

written in amongst his times of constant crusade, arose again like his verse as a Christian apologetic to those outside the church. In fact to those whom he was speaking to daily. It is worth spending some time looking at them in greater detail.

The Wicket Gate was based around a study of the Lord's Prayer. In his introduction to the book, Kennedy writes, "It is a bad time for the man in the street. He is aware he dwells in the City of Destruction...In the unutterable depths of his inarticulate soul there is trouble, and he breaks out with a lamentable cry saying, 'What shall I do?'...We cannot see the wicket-gate, or walk in the narrow way of our forefathers: and to the ancient Evangelist who kindly points it out, we can only answer 'No!' But when he further says, 'Do you see yonder shining light?' There are thousands who would reply doubtfully, hesitatingly, and yet with a thrill of hope, 'I think I do'." ¹⁷⁰

And so Kennedy was once again bringing the *Lordship of Christ*, to the whole of the situation, even those outside the realm of organised religion. He wrote, "However difficult it may be - and it is difficult - to see and to realise the unity of the secular and the sacred, it remains true that to see it and to realise it is the essence of religion." ¹⁷¹ Or as we shall see with Bonhoeffer, it is the essence of *religionless Christianity*.

¹⁷⁰ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p207.

¹⁷¹ *ibid* p208.

The Word and the Work which was dedicated, "to the unemployed men and women of Great Britain...with sympathy and respect",¹⁷² was written around an apologetic of the *logos* passage in the Gospel of John. He writes, "European man, whom the Dean of St. Paul's describes as 'the fiercest of the beasts of prey, who is not likely to abandon the weapons which have made him lord and bully of the planet', is threatened by extinction unless he becomes either a more tyrannous lord, using without restraint or remorse the powers of destruction that have been put in his hands, or dies with Christ and finds a more excellent way...The world and the life of men have meaning and purpose. At its heart the world is not mad; but sane. That is the bare minimum of faith for man. If that goes, everything goes, and we can neither live nor think about life; but only take a long time to die."¹⁷³

The Warrior, the Woman and the Christ was written as a discussion about the place of sex within creation. Greatly affected by his experiences of sexual immorality amongst the men in France, and its subsequent pastoral fall-out, Kennedy yet again tries to understand the place of sex within God's creation, exploring its purpose for mankind. Sex for Kennedy here is part of creation as a whole and thus it cannot be thought of as an independent subject, in isolation - if it is, it becomes an obsession. How many modern female and male magazines could do with listening to these words of Kennedy,

¹⁷² *ibid* p207.

¹⁷³ *ibid*.

and passing such notions on to many of my young men and women of the Fleet and the Royal Marine Corps?

Kennedy's novel, *I Pronounce Them*, was written on the same theme, but concentrated more upon the concept of marriage and often its subsequent failure. How should the church react in such instances? He wrote, "No one has really faced the problem of the 'innocent party', until he has been faced with a man or woman whom he knows and loves, and been asked to decide what God's will is in their particular case...I have had to stand it many times, and been sick with doubt."¹⁷⁴ The ethics of contraception, abortion, adultery and the whole dishonesty of sex and marriage are amongst the many themes discussed. It was thus a book drastically ahead of its time, considering it was written by an Anglican cleric in the 1920s. Interestingly, the book was very popular and even made the West End as a play. It was not however a classic work, in the terms which people would later describe his *Rough Rhymes*.

During this time, Kennedy would be accused of having a socialist or even a political agenda by those outside and inside the church. Again however, his ICF leader explains Kennedy's position this way "... (he) poured contempt on those who talked as though it were an easy matter to settle our modern problems under either a capitalistic or socialist order of society. The way out was not easy and there was no way but

¹⁷⁴ *ibid* p209.

the way of Christ." ¹⁷⁵

Perhaps a better source of judgement on Kennedy's true motivation, is his friend Dick Sheppard, who when writing about him said, "At one time it was the fashion in certain conventional circles to criticise him and to suggest that his language, at least in the pulpit was too colloquial. But for some years now it has been, I think generally recognised that Christianity had no more a powerful or effective advocate, and that it was impossible to doubt his deep reverence or to question the wisdom and knowledge that were behind his words. I have never heard speaking or preaching more sincere, more intelligent, and yet more human. The nation was privileged to witness his wonderful decade of prophecy after the restoration of peace. More and more, the church came to represent for him the hope of the world. Human relationships could only be wholesome when they were grounded in spiritual faith." ¹⁷⁶

Note there is no mention here of the word socialism!

II.5 The End

Kennedy continued in 1928 to work relentlessly. He travelled home when he could. He would speak in places such as Wandsworth Prison before six hundred inmates and promise them his help on release (which he apparently fulfilled for those who asked). He continued to write prose, poetry and books,

¹⁷⁵ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p77.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

but by 1929 he was exhausted. Kennedy worked on, and Grundy explains the reason for it: "The reason for this unmitigated service to follow his fellow men, despite the physical cost, is perhaps explained by one of his dialect phrases:

'And boys, I'd sooner fizzle up
I' the flames of burning 'ell
Than stand and look into 'Is face,
And 'ear 'Is voice say 'Well?'" ¹⁷⁷

In March 1929 Kennedy contracted pneumonia, following problems with his recurring asthma and a bout of 'flu. He died away from home, still touring, in St. Catherine's Vicarage, Liverpool. The nation went into mourning, such was their love for this little man with the big heart. In Liverpool 2,000 filed past his coffin in St. Catherine's. Tributes came in from Buckingham Palace to unemployed men's clubs. His funeral service was conducted in Worcester Cathedral.

Dick Sheppard wrote these words, "...a saint - a real saint. He was a superb Christian warrior and a wholly lovable person, Even those who disagreed with him were constrained to admire and respect his courage and sincerity. I know no man who had a deeper sympathy or a more passionate longing for wise reform in Church and State." ¹⁷⁸ Dean Moore wrote, "He, like St Paul, was in journeyings oft, suffered from fatigue, faced dangers,

¹⁷⁷ *ibid* p80.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid* p88.

and often roused antagonism by his plain speaking and refusal to employ conventional platitudes. He gave health and strength and all his remarkable powers of mind and speech to bring men and women everywhere to see in the Cross the salvation of the world." ¹⁷⁹

Kennedy's theology of the cross was his answer to the question of injustice which he witnessed throughout his ministry, whether it was in Rugby, Leeds, Worcester or on the Somme. The response to the question of 'What is your God doing for us, amongst all this pain?' resulted in many drifting away from the church and what it represented. At best people became indifferent to the notion of Christianity and it was against this enemy that Kennedy laboured for many years.

"INDIFFERENCE

When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through His hands and feet, and
made a Calvary;

They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were his
wounds and deep,

For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh
was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham they simply passed Him
by,

They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

For men had grown more tender, and they would not give
Him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in
the rain.

Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they know not
what they do,'
And still it rained the wintry rain that drenched Him
through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets without a
soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for
Calvary." ¹⁸⁰

But people had not been indifferent to *Woodbine Willie* as can
be seen by the reaction to his death. Kennedy did feel that
in many ways he had failed, and yet by his own words he
disproved his own feelings. His sense of failure entered one
of his poems prior to his death,

"It is not finished, Lord.
There is not one thing done,
There is no battle of my life,
That I have really won.
And now I come to tell thee
How I fought to fail,

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* p90.

I cannot read this writing of the years,
My eyes are full of tears,
It gets all blurred, and won't make sense,
It's full of contradictions
Like the scribblings of a child...

I can but hand it in, and hope
That thy great mind, which reads
The writings of so many lives,
Will understand this scrawl
And what it strives
To say - but leaves unsaid.

I cannot write it over,
The stars are coming out,
My body needs its bed.
I have no strength for more,
So it must stand or fall, dear Lord
That's all." ¹⁸¹

Was that, then, his legacy, of merely trying and failing?
Kennedy in many ways did fail in the big crusades of his life,
as many did at the time, at least in the short term. The
social structures for the betterment of society would come,
but later. Like Moses, Kennedy and many of his
contemporaries, such as Temple, would not cross to the other
side. Such is the prophet's calling. But where Kennedy

¹⁸¹ Kirk PTR, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1969. p189.

clearly succeeded was as a Christian apologist to the masses. His verse and speech was inspirational for Christ's Kingdom on earth. The strength in his message was its honesty and his ability to communicate in their language. This is another way of saying that he spoke truly in the *Kingdom vernacular*, that *non-religious* language, which the Padres sought to use to speak to the men, that they might understand the true gospel of Christ.

This new and common language, formed by and through the shared experience of those in the war, was not bound to the language of any single denomination or creed and was created itself for those on the Western Front. It was a language which spoke of suffering, tragedy, a cross and an Oedipus like revelation, that in and through the blindness is truth found. Thus, the tragic is transcended through the joint suffering of man and God. This language spoke of resurrection, hope and a new beginning, in and through the incarnation and sacrifice of God's Son, despite the mud. It was this language which Bonhoeffer would strive to find for his own situation, twenty five years later, when he tried to re-present the Gospel message to a secular world, whilst in a prison cell in Berlin. Kennedy expressed this common language through his poetry, books, plays and sermons. He spoke also through his kindness to his men and their families. But they were only the vessels for his message to reach his people, the language itself could only be fully interpreted by those who had truly been there. It was *felt not told*, as they say in Glasgow.

What gave him this ability? I suspect he was born with a gift of association with others. He was perceptive. The gift itself was consummated in and through his faith, faith which he described as his and our gamble. How could this faith be proved? He would answer his men in the trenches, in a way which he recorded in his poem entitled *Faith*, of which here follow some extracts:

"I bet my life on Christ - Christ Crucified.
Behold your God! My soul cries out. He hangs,
Serenely patient in His agony,
And turns the soul of darkness into light.
I look upon that body, writhing pierced
And torn with nails, and see the battlefields
Of time, the mangled dead, the gaping wounds
The sweating, dazed survivors straggling back,
The widows worn and haggard, still dry-eyed,
Because their weight of sorrow will not lift.

I see...

All history pass by, and through it all
Still shines that Faith, the Christ Faith, like a star
Which pierces drifting clouds, and tells the truth.
They pass, but it remains and shines untouched,
A pledge of that great hour which surely comes
When storm winds sob to silence, fury spent
To silver silence, and the moon sails calm
And stately through the soundless seas of Peace.

So through the clouds of Calvary - there shines
His Faith, and I believe that Evil dies,
And good lives on, loves on, and conquers all -
All War must end in Peace. These clouds are lies.
They cannot last. The blue sky is the Truth.
For God is Love. Such is my Faith, and such
My reasons for it....

It isn't proved, you fool, it can't be proved.
How can you prove a victory before
It's won? How can you prove a man who leads
To be a leader worth the following,
Unless you follow to the death?..." ¹⁸²

William Temple's thoughts following Kennedy's death were interesting. He ordered his reflections into three categories; Kennedy's ideas for society, the church and God. Due to the awful economic conditions for the many, Temple points out that Kennedy called for social justice through economic change. The West was dominated in its economic thinking by the power of greed. Any social superiority could be gained only through service, not as a right of birth or wealth. Purcell paraphrasing Temple on Kennedy says, "He loathed our acquisitive society; he feared it; found repulsive to live with all those status-symbols based on inequalities of possession, whether of goods or power, which most of us accept as part of the natural order. He could be anguished at being

¹⁸² Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage. 1997. p95.

called 'sir' and having his bag carried, not because he deserved the title or was incapable of carrying the bag, but because maybe for once he looked good for a tip. Society, he concluded could only truly be changed when men themselves were changed. And so there was a great drive in his theology and mission for the inner development of man." ¹⁸³

Temple writes, "Economic conditions are among the forces moulding the moral tendencies of those who are subjected to them; but far more deeply true is it that those conditions themselves are rooted and grounded in a moral state and outlook, which must therefore be the first object of attack."

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If this was done properly, the church would be placed at the centre of the world's problems. It would become the hope of the world, because it carried the faith in which hope, through the cross could be upheld. In the church, the secular and the sacred would meet. Temple wrote of his doctrine of the Eucharist, which reveals to us such an intermingling, "He held the full catholic doctrine - real Presence, Sacrifice, Communion...We take the Bread (so he taught) and offer it, that it may be to us the very Body of Love. But while most catholic doctrine lays its stress in what the Bread becomes to us, he laid equal stress on what it was to begin with, which enables it to become that other and greater thing. Bread is the common food of men; but it is first the fruit of man's

¹⁸³ Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p219

¹⁸⁴ Temple W, *GA Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1969. p211.

labours...So the Eucharist is the focus, the gathering into a single spiritual act, of all meaning of human life, all the aspiration towards the perfected civilisation." ¹⁸⁵

Last of all for Temple, was Kennedy's concept of God. The question was asked of him by his soldiers. What was God like? As Temple called it, "The great illumination"¹⁸⁶, of Kennedy was that God was involved in the suffering of man, involved in all things, as was shown by the cross.

Purcell concludes as regards his theology, "He was groping for it in his discussions with Mozley when a young man. He worked his way to it through the war and afterwards. God was transcendent, certainly; he was indeed 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory', the towers of York and *Bach's Mass in B Minor*! But he was not remote. No vague 'one above', he was not indifferent to the fate of his creation. He was immanent, pervading all things, involved in all things. And his self-identification with suffering invested that suffering with a mysterious dignity and significance. So the Cross, with an empty tomb and a risen Christ beyond, was the centre of things for Geoffrey, at the end, as at the beginning." ¹⁸⁷

But perhaps most significantly for this study, Kennedy found a way to speak to ordinary men. He found a language which in his time they understood. Emphasis, especially during his

¹⁸⁵ Purcell W, Woodbine Willie, Hodder and Stoughton. 1962. p220.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid* p222.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid* p223.

time with ICF was upon finding a language which did not include conventional religious phrases. The language had to keep the truth and depth of the faith but present it in a new way. A biblical re-presentation as Bonhoeffer would call it. His mixture of a theology of the cross with this language learnt amongst the slums and the trenches and coupled to his capacity for deep association with people in their hour of need, brought Kennedy great success in transmitting the Gospel.

III. CONCLUSION

What then are we to make of the findings of chaplains such as Kennedy and their encounter with the men and the conditions of the Great War. Most notably, we shall begin to see a parallel in thought with Bonhoeffer during the Second World War, in the joint cry for a *new garment* or structure for the Christian message. This *garment* was already requiring to be worn prior to the war as the masses became less and less associated with the church. The war highlighted this sense of distance between *Tommy* and the church, because *Tommy* was the only congregation the chaplains had. There was no healthy and elderly congregation to support them and offer succour. Unlike the parish lifestyle, the majority of the men whom they met were un-churched. Fortunately, during the war, the chaplains did not need to find a way of meeting the un-churched, as so many vicars and congregations do today. The un-churched were *in their face*; but what would they in fact do

with them and say to them when they met?

When the un-churched were met, many of the chaplains felt their message had little to offer. Strength of personality helped the cause and men would support and appreciate the work of a chaplain if he gained their respect. Here as we shall see, Bonhoeffer's later notion in his 'Outline for a Book', of a ministry which would encompass a secular job as well as priestly duties rings true. Indeed as we have noted Neville Talbot pre-dates Bonhoeffer with such suggestions, advocating abolishing the separateness of the ordained ministry, asking priests to earn their own living, which would then help them speak in the language of ordinary men. During the war this happened in small measures, the Chaplain acting as a stretcher bearer, runner, Welfare Officer. This seemed to make sense to the men, for it gave him a role. It also seemed to fit into the men's notions of what a clergyman should be like. How he should live. The ordinary man had no notion about ordination. The Chaplain was a man who claimed to be a Christian leader and should be one who serves and does not dominate. There could thus be a *worthwhileness* of Padre and of his position to the men which made sense and gave the Padre his place.

Gone were the days of automatic respect for the church or its message. The men who succeeded learnt a new form of language, one well away from the middle class, middle England atmosphere and the safety it offered. They learnt as we shall see with Bonhoeffer, that doing Christ's work was more important than

saying anything at all. This was the *view from below* as Bonhoeffer described it or *from the trench* as Kennedy did. Kennedy did so because he discovered that being one of the men, in highs and lows, was *the thing itself*. Theological arguments over denomination were irrelevant to the man on the street. We have noted this especially with MacLeod and the work at Talbot House. Often Roman Catholic priests were highlighted for especial praise for two reasons; firstly their sacramental role with the last rites brought them to the Front and secondly, the men understood that role. It was a role of service to others.

The majority of the men were Anglican by name, yet there seemed little sense of loyalty towards their own kind. Often there was an automatic sense of revulsion by the men towards Anglican chaplains which was difficult to overcome. They were seen to represent the hierarchy, the establishment. Church parades and the men's dislike of compulsory worship heightened such dislikes. Often the clergy spoke not only in a dialect different to the men, but used a church language to describe their situation which simply could not be understood by them. They did not have the code.

Kennedy's dialect verse spoke to them for two reasons. Firstly, it was written in the language of the men and secondly because he was there. The most notable theological finding was that of the importance of the figure of Christ on the cross, a figure which stood for sacrifice as being

atonement itself with no other explanation. A shared atonement which pointed towards a better future, both in Britain and in the after life. A cross in the foreground and an empty tomb as its horizon.

The lack of training and understanding which many chaplains received highlighted the problems, but truly the problems started during their theological college days. We have noted the importance of good foundational and continuous training of ministers, after the war, for MacLeod and the Iona Community (a lesson learnt from the trenches and the chaplaincy reports). Here as we shall see in the next chapter, Bonhoeffer's ideas at Finkenwalde, for preparation of the ministers of the *Confessing Church* were replicated. The emphasis in training was on spiritual discipline and then maintenance of it, to keep the chaplains functioning well, as one company, whatever the world may throw at them.

The fact that this had not been done prior to the war resulted in a chaplaincy that was largely irrelevant, though it helped greatly at times of burial. Its great chance to meet those on the outside was thus missed on the whole and following the economic crisis of the 1920's, any sense of a worthwhile atonement following the war, was largely lost. But Studdert Kennedy and the other chaplains who managed to make a true connection between Christianity and the men of the war cry out to us today to learn from their findings and bring the faith back into the hearts of the many, for whom Christ ministered

and died. Their aim was to reaffirm the *Lordship of Christ* over the world once more.

What then was their theological language? Firstly, the job in hand for them was to lose the *old tongue*. The church calendar did not fit into the calendar of this new society in France. It required re-working. A calendar was needed for the Western Front, one which was natural and appropriate for the men, not the greater church. As Hankett told us, the language of the religion of the educated man is often wrongly articulated anyway. It was found out at the front. What the men understood was kindness, humility, generosity and sacrifice. Hardly un-Christian motives. The men when given the *Gospel* along such lines responded and attended field services. Interestingly, when away from the field they would not attend. It was as if it was a different religion/church altogether! Perhaps it is?

Ecumenism was an issue. As mentioned, the men despised the arguments between Christian churches; besides, their own denominational leanings were largely irrelevant anyway as we have noticed. The words of the Anglican Naval Chaplain echo strongly for today as well, "Two things are brought home to me through this war. Firstly, that an Anglican religion won't do: it doesn't save souls in any volume. That is sufficient condemnation, therefore it must be scrapped. Secondly, that the only form of religion in the Anglican Communion which have

any life in them are the Evangelical and the Sacramental." ¹⁸⁸
Here we could perhaps say that for the devout, the Eucharist was important, as it might be for those who would receive prior to a battle. The Sacrament would feed spiritually those who were churchmen already, the twenty percent. Evangelism spoke to the many if the theology was right.

What of Kennedy's theology? Firstly, it was a theology that spoke of the human-ness of Christ. It spoke of the Sacrament of *Feet Washing* rather than Eucharist. It spoke of friendship as the *sacrament of life*. It recognised social injustice, it understood suffering, the cross was enough. War blew apart any sweet notions of atonement as being an exact science. It was mystical. Christ was immanent in all things because of the cross, suffering was shared and therefore in some ways tamed, this is at-one-ment.

The war revealed the trivialities of religious practice, it created a new race of priests in France. New priests because they served the un-churched and not the church. They served their Regiments not their denominations. This was their new family, new denomination. But this was hard. A new form of discipline would be required to maintain this new found practice. Kennedy emphasised the need for a prayer life which asked Him to give you the strength to do things for Him. God has good things to give us already, are we prepared to receive

¹⁸⁸ Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p350.

them? All men are the sons of God, they only need to realise it.

Kennedy's theology did not shirk the problem of failure. Always one for speaking of sin as the arch-enemy without falling into the trap of moralising narrowly, he pointed out that God's way was a better way. This was understandable to the men, for the way things were for them in the trenches it could not have got much worse. Kennedy believed that a spiritual life in Christ was the only answer and hence the need for the church to address the issue (MacLeod would use this notion in speaking of the *healthiness* of man). This notion would have both personal and national effects upon the life of the nation. Through prayer would the Spirit of God breathe new life into the spirit of man. Old bones would rise.

The Eucharist was not the end in itself for Kennedy, it was a means to an end. The cross and resurrection for Kennedy signified a current state and a future promise. The battle was not finished, service was not complete. Sin and suffering remained and could only be understood in light of God's suffering, which continues until the battle is won. So God reigns, but on a tree, broken but unconquered, his cross a symbol of ultimate truth. Kennedy's theology can thus best be summed up by his sculpture of Christ outside his church, one of victory and yet still hanging on the tree, in all its weakness.

So, as we shall see, like Bonhoeffer, Kennedy would find a theology which spoke of strength in weakness, identification of God with man through suffering, of the symbols of Christian faith (Eucharist, creeds) being *the thing itself*, without being it. Like poetry hinting at truth. He called for an open theological debate, concentrated upon Christian action and called for this to be maintained through a renewed form of prayer life. Action spoke louder than words. He spoke of the *Lordship of Christ*, following Kirk and the ICF mission statement claiming the whole earth for Christ. There was no God of the gaps here. The secular and the sacred were one.

He was heard, they flocked to him, as the crowds did to his Master. His great projects failed in the immediate and though many became churchmen through him, many stayed away because the church never learnt to use the tongue which Kennedy used. She was still speaking in the language of those who were church goers. She still is, some shouting it a bit louder and more sincerely, but it is still an unintelligible language to most. Can a new language be found?

Chapter Three: The Theology and Action of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I. BACKGROUND

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote the following words from his prison cell in Berlin, during 1944, "Are there religionless Christians? If religion is only a garment of Christianity - and even this garment has looked very different at times - then what is religionless Christianity?" ¹⁸⁹

This question which Bonhoeffer left us, is perhaps his most famous theological legacy, and was, not surprisingly, a culmination of many factors. His family and friends played an influential part in the development of his thought process. His travels to Italy, Spain, England and in particular America, would also open his eyes to many different peoples and new methods of approach with which a Berliner would not normally have been familiar.

His opposition to Hitler and the Aryan Clause, would bring Bonhoeffer into direct conflict with his church and his Fuhrer, culminating in his involvement in the bomb plot on 20th July 1944, to assassinate Hitler himself. Bonhoeffer would pay with his life for such opposition, executed alongside fellow conspirators in Flossenbug Concentration Camp on April 9th 1945.

¹⁸⁹ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press. 1986. p280.

When executed, at the young age of 39 years, Bonhoeffer would leave behind a mother and father who had lost a son during the Great War, and two sons and two sons-in-law in the Second War, due to their involvement in the conspiracy. His twin sister Sabine, at the time of his death would be a refugee in London, having been forced to leave Germany because her husband was of Jewish stock.

When one reads this great story of heroism, one cannot fail to be inspired by such action and bravery within one family, of which Dietrich was but a part. Such tales expand further when one reads the correspondence between Dietrich and his young fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer,¹⁹⁰ written during Dietrich's captivity between 1943-1945. The bravery of Maria in itself inspires the reader; while the gentleness and hopefulness of the letters reveals a man who loved not only his family, church and theology, but also a young woman. Even within such a world as Hitler's Germany, Bonhoeffer, along with many others was a man, who lived, loved and hoped.

In order to understand this man, and in particular his theological writings, especially from Tegel prison, one needs a wider understanding of the person he was, of those to whom he was writing, and the type of world which would receive such ideas. We will examine fully Bonhoeffer's family background and the historical circumstances which would place him in

¹⁹⁰ See Wedemeyer M. von, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, ed. Ruth-Alice von Bismarck/Ulrich Kabitz. Abingdon Press. USA. 1995.

Tegel prison, alongside the theological understandings and influences which shaped his thought. Both belong to the same person and cannot be separated. Lord Longford, in the foreword to Bonhoeffer's twin sister's book writes, "As we study his life, we appreciate without effort the complete integration between his theology and his heroism, and the burning faith which inspired them both." ¹⁹¹

It will be shown that Lord Longford was correct in emphasising this connection. What we will see is that the *Jewish Question*, and what Bethge calls Bonhoeffer's *Theology of Israel*, played a great part in Bonhoeffer's theological development and subsequent action against the authorities. Out of such a situation of opposition, we can better learn what Bonhoeffer means by a *non religious language*.

There has of course been a great debate over the last seventy years on the subject of *religion*. Sparked off in 1919, in Barth's first edition of his *The Epistle to the Romans*, *religion* is placed, along with the law and sin, as being a process which alienates man from his true self (thus also God). We will look in greater detail at the contribution Barth has made in this debate and note the early influence he had upon Bonhoeffer's understanding of the subject. For the time being it will suffice to note Bonhoeffer's reliance on Barth and yet also to recognize that, as early as the writing of *Act and*

¹⁹¹ Leibholz-Bonhoeffer S, *The Bonhoeffers: Portrait of a Family*, St. Martins Press. New York. 1971. pvii.

Being in 1929, differences between the two men were already becoming apparent.

Like all of us, Bonhoeffer was a man of his time. He lived in a time of great theological change, and the world in which the academic debate flourished, was itself, in a state of great flux, especially so in Germany. Still recovering from the result and subsequent punishment of the Great War, Germany would be less capable both economically and politically of facing the depression that would grip the West.

Peter Hoffmann tells us that, "The Weimar Republic, successor to the Prussian/German empire defeated in the First World War, had not been able to overcome its external or internal weaknesses and contradictions. In particular it had been unable to cope with the continuous and irresponsible attacks of its opponents, both left-wing and 'national' - German-National (Deutschnationale), reactionary, militarist and ultra-conservative; even in its early years there had been right and left-wing extremist putschs, with uproar and separatism, with the refusal, primarily by the nationalist elements of the National Assembly, to affix their signature to the Treaty of Versailles and an equal refusal to assume responsibility for their action by forming a government. In the following years the victors too did not allow the young state to recover from the war; society and the economy were ruined and eroded by the burden of reparations and by inflation. When hatred finally began to give way to common

sense and a good start had been made with economic consolidation, the reviving republic, in common with all industrial nations, was rocked in 1929 by the most catastrophic economic crisis which the world had ever seen."

¹⁹² Not surprisingly then, in this atmosphere, a more extreme form of political answer would be suggested and listened to by the German people, whose greatest desire was to restore themselves to their pre-war stature.

The Bonhoeffer family themselves remained supporters of the Weimar Republic. Eberhard Bethge reminds us that, "During his (Dietrich's) last years at school there is an increasing evidence of his opposition to the right-wing radicalism that was becoming more and more obstreperous. When he went off on his last school holidays, he wrote to his parents, (saying that) he found himself sitting opposite 'a man wearing a swastika' and had to spend the whole time arguing with him. The man, he said, was 'really quite obtusely right-wing.' A few days before, on 24th June 1922, the assassination of Walther Rathenau had taken place. Bonhoeffer heard the shots in his class-room in the Königsallee. This is what one of his school-fellows has to say on the subject: 'I particularly remember Bonhoeffer on the day of Rathenau's murder. The average age of our form in the Grunewald grammar school was seventeen, but he and G.S., who ended up committing suicide in exile, were only sixteen. I remember the shots we heard during the lesson, and then, in the playground during the

¹⁹² Hoffmann P, *The History of German Resistance 1933-1945*, MIT Press. USA. 1977. p3.

break, we heard what had happened...I still remember my friend Bonhoeffer's passionate indignation, his deep and spontaneous anger...I remember his asking what would become of Germany if its best leaders were killed. I remember it because I was surprised at the time at its being possible to know so exactly where one stood.' " ¹⁹³

Dietrich of course shared the same views as the rest of his family. He was too young to have formulated any great political interest personally, and if truth be told he was never too concerned with politics until his return from his first American trip in 1930-31. Herein lies a possible source of Bonhoeffer's uniqueness, certainly within a European context.

The family position, as a middle class, bourgeois, professional family, lay, as we noted earlier, with the Republic. The family friends in Berlin, such as Hans Delbruck the historian and Adolf von Harnack were supporters also and they had a profound effect upon the family outlook. The Bonhoeffers, however did not wholly represent their social grouping's attitude. Many of their peers remained royalist at heart, where anti-Semitism remained part of this culture. Indeed, much of Harnack's and Delbruck's time had been spent opposing legislation, which had been anti-Semitic during the twenties, even within the Protestant Church. Here they succeeded against Stoecker's attempted introduction of the

¹⁹³ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985, p19.

Jewish Question within the Protestant Social Congress. The conclusion drawn by Erik Peterson in 1928 (in a letter to Harnack) was this, "Sociologically and in outlook the Protestant Church corresponds roughly with the mentality and sociological status of the German National People's Party." ¹⁹⁴

The Bonhoeffers' support for the Weimar Republic would continue to its demise. However, unlike his brother Klaus and his brothers-in-law Gerhard Leibholz and Hans von Dohnanyi, (through their professional commitments) Dietrich would remain a distant spectator until 1932 and the threat of the State against the Church.

I.1 The Church, Politics and the Economic Situation

The economic crisis which threatened Germany as a state also worried the church. In 1919, the separation between church and state occurred, and this included a financial divorce between state and church, although the right to maintain a church tax remained. This however did little to help church poverty, for as Scholder tells us, "In Brunswick, which along with Saxony was especially endangered, the quarterly income of a pastor in Autumn 1922, did not even reach the level of the weekly wage of an unskilled labourer." ¹⁹⁵ A year later things became much worse when a violent inflation swept through the country. By September 1929 some 1.3 million Germans were

¹⁹⁴ *ibid* p91.

¹⁹⁵ Scholder K, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, Vol 1, SCM Press Ltd. 1987. p6.

registered unemployed, three years later this had risen to over 5 million.

By 1932, Hoffman states that, "Poverty was still very great, in many individual cases almost inconceivable. There were working-class couples paying 10 marks rent per month but receiving only 3.20 marks per week in national assistance, leaving them in theory only 2.80 marks per month to live off. If they were not to die of hunger they had to rely on gifts from relatives and friends or credit in the shops. Another worker with a wife and two children received 9 marks per week in national assistance but was paying 4.50 per week in rent, leaving available for the family 0.16 marks per person per day. In this situation the communists promised class warfare and a better, but distant, future; the Nazis, on the other hand, promised work, bread and good order; since they also presented themselves as patriots, many believed in them rather than the communists who, it was feared, would bring revolution and civil war." ¹⁹⁶ Just like the extreme inflation of 1923, the economic crisis would once again affect the whole country.

Everyone was touched, for this crisis attacked not only the working classes as indicated above, the middle classes were also affected, where not only their livelihoods were threatened, but also their respectability. Bullock writes, "Like men and women in a town stricken by an earthquake, millions of Germans saw the apparently solid framework of

¹⁹⁶ Hoffmann P, *The History of German Resistance 1933-1945*, MIT Press, USA. 1977. p4.

their existence cracking and crumbling. In such circumstances men entertain fantastic fears, extravagant hatreds, and extravagant hopes. In such circumstances the extravagant demagogy of Hitler began to attract a mass following as it had never done before." ¹⁹⁷

History of course tells the story of National Socialist political success and the wheels started to turn towards a collision course for war in Europe once again. In the 1932 elections, the NSDAP - the Nazi Party, collected 37.4% of the vote. By the November their share decreased to 33.1%, but in March 1933, (when the Nazis had been in power for a month and had been terrorizing the electorate), they scored 43.9%. This however must be balanced with the fact that by mid 1933 the unemployment figures dropped by one and a half million. Whilst Hitler never at any time enjoyed a mass popular support within the country, his support was strong enough to gain power. Hitler had promised the electorate, a desperate one at that, work, food and safe streets.

Amidst all this, Bonhoeffer would minister, study and preach. In the midst of lecturing, ecumenical committee meetings and college chaplaincy in 1932, he was asked also to lead a confirmation class at Zion Church, Berlin, which had gone out of control. "It's about the worst area of Berlin with the most difficult social and political conditions," ¹⁹⁸he wrote. Here,

¹⁹⁷ Bullock A, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Pelican Books. 1962. p153.

¹⁹⁸ Bethge E, Bethge R, Gremmels C, *Bonhoeffer D: A Life in Pictures*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p89.

amongst the slums, Bonhoeffer, though grappling with great theological debates of the time in an academic arena, would be forced to measure his thought against what he saw with his eyes and touched with his hands. Ronald Gregor-Smith states that, " His problem, both in theology and in his life, was how to maintain simultaneously both the reality of the world and the reality of God." ¹⁹⁹ How he would achieve this would ultimately culminate in his thoughts from prison.

We note that whilst preparing his lecture series on *Christology* in 1933, Bonhoeffer was also preaching to congregations in his Lutheran Church whom, he judged, believed in a transcendent God but did not accept Christ. In his book *Act and Being*, Christ's realm (*regnum Christi*) was the church, but this would move to the world, interestingly, as Bonhoeffer's ministry itself moved outwards and away from the church to the world. Indeed how much more worldly could a prison be?

It was to this world and its people, the great majority who did not go to church and necessarily believe in any of it, that Bonhoeffer tried to speak. Bethge, his friend, to whom he wrote the most famous letters from prison, states that Bonhoeffer was throughout his lifetime trying to answer the question he asked of himself in the letter of 30th April 1944, "Who Christ really is, for us today?" ²⁰⁰ He needed to answer

¹⁹⁹ Gregor-Smith R, *World Come of Age*, Collins. 1967. p14.

²⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p270.

this question for himself so that he could, in truth give answers to his people for whom he had pastoral care, whether they be his Berlin confirmands, his Jewish friends or his prison colleagues.

Bonhoeffer's conclusion, along with Barth, was that the time for *religion* was, if not over, coming to an end, and that Seeberg's *religious a priori* man, that most naturally created *religious* being, was, in fact, already dead. We will deal later, and extensively, with Bonhoeffer's notion of *religion*, which will hopefully enable an understanding of *religionless Christianity* to be found. This will show that (as I have hinted at earlier in this work) *religionless Christianity* is a non denominational one for Bonhoeffer. It remains Christian by being firmly supported by a devout prayer life, yet it is *denominationless*. The proof of this argument is found in our understanding of what Bonhoeffer meant by *religion* and in the circumstances which influenced him when he coined first the phrase.

I.2 The Jewish Question

Any understanding of Bonhoeffer's theology cannot be fully appreciated, unless the full horror of the attack upon the Jews is understood. Like the economic crisis which touched everyone, the politics of the Hitler regime touched all as well. Anti-Semitism, which was already prevalent within the church and throughout the nation, would come to dominate the

lives of both Jew and Gentile alike. Daniel Goldhagen writes, "Without a doubt, it is (anti-semitism) the all-time leading form of prejudice and hatred within Christian countries...Briefly, until (and, to a lesser extent, even during) the modern period, with the rise of secularism, beliefs about Jesus were integral to the moral order of Christian society. Christians defined themselves partly by differentiating themselves from and often in direct opposition to Jews." ²⁰¹

Whilst it is hard to dispute Goldhagen's well documented claim that anti-semitism was rife within Germany and the old Austro-Hungarian empire, the weakness in his argument is his failure to recognise the extent to which the Jewish struggle was, for many in the church and indeed many other groups in Germany, their struggle also. The fact that they did not necessarily succeed does not deny their trying. Joachim Fest states, "One of the factors inhibiting appreciation of the German resistance has been the cacophony of voices in which it found expression. Opponents of the regime were motivated not only by a simple concern for human rights but also by Christian, socialist, conservative, and even reactionary beliefs." ²⁰²

Integral to this struggle was the theology of Bonhoeffer. Indeed much of his radicalism would not have arisen had he not been involved with the struggle for the Jews. Fest tells us,

²⁰¹ Goldhagen DJ, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Little, Brown & Co. 1996, p42.

²⁰² Fest J, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson. Orion Publishing Group Ltd. 1996. p208.

"A man of radical religious conviction, Bonhoeffer had repeatedly insisted that Hitler had to be 'exterminated' regardless of the political consequences. At a secret church conference in Geneva in 1941 he had gone even further, announcing that he prayed for the defeat of his country because that was the only way Germany would be able to atone for the crimes it had committed." ²⁰³

For all of those involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, especially with the July 20th 1944 example, Christian belief and outrage towards Hitler's actions against minority groups in Eastern Europe featured as one of the strongest motives. Fest says, "In their interrogations or in their testimony before the People's Court, (the Nazi court where they were tried following their arrest for their involvement in the bomb plot as mentioned above) twenty of the accused conspirators from the various groups - whether civilian or military, national-conservative, middle class, or socialist - mentioned the persecution of the Jews as the primary motive for their opposition. Others emphasized the elimination of civil rights, the arbitrary, dictatorial style of government, and the assault on the churches. The basic conviction uniting those who acted out of religious belief was best expressed by Hans-Bernd von Haeften, when he stated before the People's Court that Hitler was 'a great perpetrator of evil'. Gerstentenmaier called this remark 'the key to the entire resistance', from which all the rest flowed as a Christian

²⁰³ *ibid* p208.

duty." ²⁰⁴

Goldhagen is thus quite clearly mistaken in his assertion that Protestant church leaders who supported the Confessing Church and were involved in the struggle against Hitler did so for no other reason than that they disapproved of the mix between religion and politics.²⁰⁵ They like the others mentioned above shared the same motivating factors.

What will be shown later, is that Bonhoeffer's involvement in the Jewish struggle was also of a personal nature. Friends (and especially members of his ordinand community for whom he was responsible), and more importantly relatives such as his twin sister Sabine, would be persecuted due to their allegiances and belief. In defence of them all Bonhoeffer would agitate and write. Everything produced and acted upon was carried out in this atmosphere. For Goldhagen²⁰⁶ to suggest that Bonhoeffer in 1943 remained anti-semitic is quite wrong and ill records history.

Peter Hoffmann balances the argument on behalf of the churches by stating that they were, "The only organisations to produce some form of a popular movement against the Nazi regime." ²⁰⁷ He reminds us that the Pastors Emergency League, formed in 1933, along with the Confessional Church, emerged as a direct

²⁰⁴ *ibid* p326.

²⁰⁵ *see ibid* p114.

²⁰⁶ *ibid* p115.

²⁰⁷ Hoffmann P, *The History of German Resistance 1933-1945*, MIT Press. USA. 1977. p13.

result of opposition to the addition of an Aryan Clause. He writes, "In general terms, therefore, the churches were the only major organisations to offer comparatively early and open resistance; they remained so in later years. They achieved a certain success, for even during the war the Nazi rulers did not think that they could risk complete destruction of the churches. They were confronted here with barriers which they could not understand - the fortitude and integrity of religious conviction, conscience and a sense of responsibility for one's fellow men which were not to be extinguished by regulations and prohibitions." ²⁰⁸

As noted above however, the church was not the only group involved in resistance. Indeed Bonhoeffer's involvement in the conspiracy of 20th July 1944 was with a group of individuals totally unconnected to the church. Rather the connection was made through his family and their circle of friends. In broader terms of resistance, throughout Germany between the years of 1933-45, some three million²⁰⁹ Germans had been held by their own government for political reasons. 800,000 were held for active resistance and (incredibly and tragically for the Bonhoeffer family), 4,980 were executed for participation in the 20th July 1944 conspiracy.

Not all, of course, were involved in active resistance but what concerns us within this context, is simply the extent to

²⁰⁸ see *ibid* p14.

²⁰⁹ see *ibid* p14-17.

which the Jewish victimisation effected Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a person and as a theologian. It can be shown that he was involved in activities of resistance because of the *Jewish Question*. Bonhoeffer never was particularly interested in politics per se, his involvement was due however, to the terrible situation of the attack upon the Jews, which became for him, even more pointed following the infamous *Reichspogromnacht* of November 9th, 1938.

1.3 Religion

Bonhoeffer's reflections and concerns about the subject of religion might now be seen to stand firmly in the context of opposition and resistance to the Nazi regime. How would the church respond to such an institutional attack upon itself and its *religious* structure? Would the church stand firm on her principles of peace and justice?

Martin Niemoller following the war concluded that, "Christianity in Germany bears a greater responsibility before God than the National Socialists, the SS and the Gestapo. We ought to have recognized the Lord Jesus in the brother who suffered and was persecuted despite him being a communist or a Jew...Are not we Christians much more to blame..."²¹⁰ One of the aims of Bonhoeffer's *non religious language and interpretation*, for the future, would be to enable Christians

²¹⁰ Goldhagen DJ, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Little, Brown & Co. 1996. p114.

to better understand a Biblical ethic of action against a tyrannical regime, should ever the need arise.

The Confessing Church for Bonhoeffer was, at least for a time, what he had hoped for. His students whom he trained at Zingst and Finkenwalde represented the new type of pastor in this new church. When he was in prison writing his thoughts down on new language and structure, he tells us that he did so for the church and her servants. His thoughts then as regards religion, are rooted in the reality of the situation of his work and broader life, as mentioned earlier. Bethge defends his friend's views on religion by saying in 1961, "The provinciality of Christian life today speaks loudly for Bonhoeffer's thesis." ²¹¹

How then does one discover whether Bonhoeffer's thoughts can be useful for the church today? Firstly, one needs to accept that Bonhoeffer's definition of religion is correct and if this is found to be the case, then this enables us to understand the decline in the established and national churches of the West which was occurring in Bonhoeffer's day. As we have seen within the Royal Navy in chapter one, this is most obvious, for more and more men and women declare themselves now to be non denominational. But a high percentage, like the men during the Great War, remain interested in the message of Jesus of Nazareth and are glad to accept the pastoral care of a Chaplain who bases his life in

²¹¹ Gregor-Smith R, *World Come of Age*, Collins. 1967. p80.

service of that message. If one remains bound to denominational church agendas and structures which do not fit nor represent the culture that they are based in, then the church through being *religious* will remain on the outskirts or in the *provinces* for relevance to that community. Thus does Christ's message not get heard.

Bethge tells us that, "Bonhoeffer wanted to re-check the doctrinal shape of the churches, in order to prove that Christ is precisely not all that religion says he is and what we have been left with is his *Short Outline* in the letters from prison." ²¹² This doctrinal shape interests me and we will return to the short outline for the book which tragically was never allowed to be written. But first we must go to the beginning to find our true end.

II. BONHOEFFER, PASTOR AND WITNESS FOR JEWISH FREEDOM

Dietrich, when just a boy decided to become a pastor. Bethge tells us, "When he was about 14, for instance, they (brothers and sisters) tried to persuade him that he was taking the path of least resistance, and that the church to which he proposed to devote himself was a poor, feeble, petty bourgeois institution, but he confidently replied: 'In that case I shall reform it'." ²¹³

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p22.

In this section we shall examine the two main driving forces in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, namely the ministry and the cause of individual freedom. Both arise out of the situation Bonhoeffer was thrown headlong into through political change in Germany, and his response seems to be somewhat predictable considering his family background and influence.

Bonhoeffer was a Berliner, born into a professional, bourgeois family. He would be expected to take his place within that family's structure and make something of himself. Bethge his biographer writes, "The rich world of his ancestors gave Dietrich Bonhoeffer the standards for his own life. To it, he owed his sure judgement and confidence, something that cannot be achieved in a generation. So he grew up in a family which saw the real factors of education not in school but in a deep-rooted sense of obligation, the awareness of being guardian of a great historical heritage and cultural tradition. For Dietrich Bonhoeffer that meant learning to understand and respect the thought and life of previous generations. It could also, however, impose the demand to make one's own contribution, to decide differently from one's forebears - and to honour them precisely in so doing." ²¹⁴

From his grandfather Friedrich Bonhoeffer's line, Bonhoeffer could trace ancestors such as goldsmiths, clergy, doctors,

²¹⁴ Bethge E, Bethge R, Gremmels C, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Life in Pictures*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p12.

councillors and burgomasters. In contrast, his grandmother, came out of the Tafel family and they brought the family into association with those who had been members of student fraternities, passionate republicans and socialists. For instance, Bonhoeffer's grandfather, Friederich Tafel and his brother Gottlob had been expelled from Wurttemberg as student activists and democrats. His grandmother, Julie Bonhoeffer played a major part in his life, but, he only knew his grandfather through anecdotes, for he died when Bonhoeffer was small. Julie died at the beginning of January, 1936. However, this was not before in 1933, aged ninety one, she marched through a Nazi cordon in Berlin demonstrating outside Jewish shops. By publicly opposing the Nazi cordon and facing their displeasure through shopping in the Jewish stores, Julie set an example of courage and identification with the Jews for her family. It was an example of how to live in the coming years to her grand-son. Interestingly, Bonhoeffer, when giving the funeral address at his grand-mother's funeral, made a promise to be loyal to her and her ideals.

On his mother's side we meet no less a distinguished family. Stanislaus Graf von Kalckreuth, Bonhoeffer's great grandfather, forsaking his forbears' calling as soldiers and landowners, became a painter and two of his paintings hung on the wall of the Bonhoeffer house in Marienburger Allee. The family were all that embodied Prussian high society. Indeed, Bonhoeffer's great-aunt, was a lady in waiting to Crown Princess Victoria, the consort of Frederick III. During the

Franco-Prussian war, Bonhoeffer's grandfather, Karl Alfred von Hase, became a divisional chaplain in Hanover. He married Clara nee Countess von Kalckreuth, and their daughter Paula von Hase was born in 1876. She was to become Bonhoeffer's mother. In 1889 his grandfather became the Court Preacher in Potsdam, to Wilhelm II and from 1894 he became Consistory Councillor and Professor of Practical Theology in Breslau.

Now one might think that enough precedent has already been set. One other notable relation needs to be recognised however; Karl August Hase, Dietrich's great grandfather. He was Professor of Church History and the History of Dogma at Jena, where he taught for some sixty years, and his book *The History of Dogma* became a study guide for the young Dietrich many years later.

A more direct influence, as might be expected, came from Bonhoeffer's parents. His mother was a school teacher in 1894 and she decided to teach the children herself through their early years. On the other side, Bonhoeffer's father, Karl, would become a distinguished Professor of Psychiatry. As a medical student Karl Bonhoeffer studied at Tübingen, where indeed his son would first study. He took up a teaching position at Breslau and then in 1912 he moved to Berlin, where he took up the Chair of Psychiatry and Neurology, the leading position in its field in Germany. The move to Berlin brought the Bonhoeffer family into direct contact with many leading academic figures of the time, perhaps most notably for our

study, Adolf von Harnack and Ernst Troeltsch.

Bonhoeffer's brothers and sisters also played an influential role in his development. His eldest brother Karl-Friederich would become a noted physicist, and though a sceptic on religious matters, would remain the most loyal of writers to Bonhoeffer when he was in prison. Walter his second eldest brother would tragically die in 1918 during the Great War. Klaus, in 1923, qualified as a lawyer, and his big sister Ursula would marry Rudiger Schleicher, who was a lawyer with the Ministry of Transport.

In 1925, his sister Christine would marry Hans von Dohnanyi, who worked in the Institute of Foreign Policy, and in 1926 his twin sister Sabine married Gerhard Leibholz, who in 1929 took the Chair of Public Law at Greifswald. This family connection would take Dietrich into Tegel and beyond, for by the end of the war the Bonhoeffer parents were to have lost two sons and two sons in law through their involvement with the resistance.

In 1942, Bonhoeffer wrote to his nephew Hans Walter Schleicher the following words which, perhaps best sum up the overall influence which his background and family had upon him.

"You have acquired certain basic ideas about how to live. You know - perhaps it is partly still in your unconscious, but that doesn't matter - the great value of a good family life, good parents, right and truth, humanity and education. You yourself have been a

musician for years and in recent years you have read a great many books, and all that will have left a mark on you - and finally, you also know something of the Bible, the Lord's Prayer and church music. All this has given you a picture of Germany which you can never lose...But it is clear, as you yourself are well aware, that this will involve you in conflicts, not only with those who are by nature mean, and whose power will terrify you in the coming weeks, but also simply because by coming from such a family you are different from most other people, even in the most trivial matters. So the important thing is to regard the advantages one has over others - and you have plenty of them! - not as merits but as a gift, to put oneself and all that one has at the disposal of others, and to love them even though they are different." ²¹⁵

However, this was not how Bonhoeffer always felt. When still a student, he viewed these advantages of bourgeois life rather differently. Bonhoeffer felt at the time that he was cut off from the real Germany and its citizens by his class, and so he told his younger sister Susanne that, "I should like to live an unsheltered life for once, we cannot understand the others. We always have our parents to help us over every difficulty and, however far away we may be from them, that gives us such a shameless security." ²¹⁶ This form of privileged life did

²¹⁵ *ibid* p26.

²¹⁶ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p9.

indeed haunt Bonhoeffer at times.²¹⁷ That which was passed on, by those of a privileged background, was not necessarily a problem, in itself. The real problem would arise when the Word was proclaimed by a bourgeois church and it could not be understood or even became a stumbling block, to those not associated with privilege.

The gulf in understanding thus needed to be bridged, and Bonhoeffer as early as his time running the Sunday school at Grunewald appreciated this, and it was to this end that he continuously worked. As Bethge states, "The hardest theological statements of Barth were worth nothing if they could not be explained in toto to these Grunewald children."²¹⁸ Whilst Bonhoeffer had a terrific advantage over some, he also felt a large pressure upon himself to 'become something', largely due to the achievements of his other family members. However, there was never any pressure placed upon him to become a pastor. Indeed, his church background, along with that of the whole family was very limited. Even at the great church festivals, the family preferred to celebrate them at home rather in church. This is not to say that there was no Christian knowledge, for the children's mother regularly held bible class, which meant mostly, the reading of stories. The children were also taught to say both grace at the table and to say evening prayer in bed.

²¹⁷ Bethge E, Bethge R, Gremmels C, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Life in Pictures*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p10.

²¹⁸ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p65.

So perhaps it is slightly strange that Dietrich should choose to become a pastor, especially since the church was regarded as somewhat ridiculous by his family. Bethge concludes that, "The impulse to become a theologian for the sake of the church belongs to a later period."²¹⁹ Bonhoeffer's motivation in the early period then, seems to have been more about establishing himself in his own right as a 'professional' and academic, within the family and in a field of his own.

We must however balance this thought for Bethge also suggests that, "Bonhoeffer decided to become a minister and a theologian when he was a boy, and he does not seem seriously to have wavered in this ambition. At home, he made no bones about it. When his brothers and sisters refused to take him seriously, it only made him more determined."²²⁰ The decision to, at least, head towards academic theology was set at the age of fifteen, when Bonhoeffer chose Hebrew as his specialist language, indeed, he started going occasionally to church with his mother. His father was to write years later about his own reaction to his son's decision, "At the time when you decided to devote yourself to theology I sometimes thought to myself that a quiet uneventful, minister's life, as I knew it from my Swabian uncles and as Morike describes it, would really almost be a pity for you. So far as uneventfulness is concerned, I was greatly mistaken. That such a crisis should still be possible in the ecclesiastical field seemed to me with my

²¹⁹ *ibid* p20.

²²⁰ *ibid* p22.

scientific background out of the question." ²²¹ Perhaps we will never be certain as to the exact reasons why Bonhoeffer would choose to become a pastor, it would seem that he was as Bethge suggests, motivated to a certain extent, by a desire to find his own profession and thus place, within the family group. However, his determination from a young age to become a pastor and theologian and his awakening to church matters, in terms of attendance with his mother when fifteen, perhaps suggest a deeper calling beyond personal ambition.

Bonhoeffer was a man who enjoyed answering questions, even as a boy he asked deeper questions, but unlike most children who then suppress them believing there would be no answer, he sought them out. His brother Walter's death deeply affected him, indeed it is perhaps from then that he started asking questions of himself over how he would face death himself. Guilt also became a factor for Bonhoeffer, for he was too young to fight in the Great War and his mother's grief could hardly be abated by him, or perhaps that was how he felt. Certainly we see from the unnamed document of 1932 such influences. ²²² Guilt also played on his mind when it came to his decision to become a theologian and pastor. Indeed such thoughts would haunt him throughout his ministry, as can be seen in the poem, *Who am I?* written in prison. ²²³ Such doubt however seemed to exist when he was still at school, (certainly this was how Bonhoeffer remembered it in 1932) when

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² see *ibid* p24.

²²³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p347.

he feared his motives were more for personal gain to establish himself as an academic, rather than as an answer to a true calling to the ministry for Christ's sake. Perhaps his actions for Christ were always driven as a response to such doubting and guilt?

Bonhoeffer's respect for his father and brother, Karl-Freiderich, seemed also to drive him forward to answer many questions of faith. Both of them were scientifically minded, and neither could be fooled by religious jargon. So it seems Bonhoeffer was driven naturally to answer many questions in a *non religious sense*, simply to answer his own family's questions. It is interesting to note that Bonhoeffer's correspondence with Karl-Friederich and his parents was high during his time in prison, when indeed his thoughts had come to a head, in both a practical and theological manner. But in the early days, when a younger brother is heavily influenced by his big brother, Bethge wrote, "His brother Karl-Friederich's scepticism, against which he had to defend himself, spurred him into grappling with epistemology at an early age, and he worked hard at philosophy during his last years at school." ²²⁴

II.1 Ecumenism and Friendship

Another highly significant feature of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and thought, is the heavy influence ecumenical affairs

²²⁴ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p27.

had upon him. This practical encounter would strongly effect his understanding of *religion* and what *religionless Christianity* is, backed up as we shall see later by his theological studies. Not only did he meet many friends who affected his way of thinking through ecumenism and *religionless Christianity*, but in many ways these connections opened up his vision from a more limited, nationalistic, denominational one, to an internationalist, ecumenical point of view. This experience is of course close to that of the serving chaplains past and present who through their working environment naturally meet and work with people from out with their previous denominational background. The same of course is true of the service person, whether it be today or during the Great War.

Bonhoeffer's first brush with foreign travel was to Rome, where he was struck by the universality of the Catholic Church. However, when working as an assistant pastor in Barcelona, Bonhoeffer was disappointed with the Catholic Church he found there and his contact with it was minimal. The turning point would come later in 1930-31 when he travelled to America, and this trip to the States was to become a significant stage in his self development.

Bonhoeffer at the time of this trip paid little attention to general politics, even though in 1930, the first great election success of the Nazis struck German society. It seemed to pass him by, although he did speak of Germany's

aspirations of peace to his American audiences. His trip as an exchange student, like George MacLeod a decade before, would be to Union Theological Seminary, New York, which was the influencing factor in persuading him to go. For perhaps more significant than the content of his studies, were the lecturers, students and the subsequent new thought that he would encounter there. New York in 1930, was suffering more dramatically than Germany economically following the Wall Street crash the previous year. Indeed, the city was in a state of crisis. Unemployment was high and socially the country was suffering from general disharmony, perhaps best represented by the prohibition crisis. Race relations were a major problem and Bonhoeffer, the Berliner, was intrigued by its aspects, studying in detail the Negro culture.

Bonhoeffer formed a friendship with Frank Fisher, who was a fellow student at Union and who was himself a Negro. Through Fisher, he learnt of the 'realities' of the Negro community in Harlem. But perhaps, more importantly, it was through him, that Bonhoeffer started attending the local Abyssinian Baptist Church, where he worked in the Sunday school and in the evening groups.

Bethge says, "Thus he gained an entry into the people's homes." ²²⁵ His brother Karl Friederich replied to a letter of Bonhoeffer's on the question of the race issue, saying, "It seems impossible to see the right way to tackle the

²²⁵ *ibid* p110.

problem...at all events our Jewish question is a joke in comparison; there cannot be many people left who maintain they are oppressed here. At any rate, not in Frankfurt..."²²⁶ And thus was Bonhoeffer's link to human liberty first truly and practically encountered, for as his brother surmised and Dietrich realised from his time with the *Thursday Group*²²⁷ in Berlin, Germany was not at this point a country with an overt race problem. This is despite Goldhagen's thesis, and shows that there were some areas in Germany which were less anti-semitic than others. Equally important to the above, was Bonhoeffer's practical work in Harlem and the experience that this entailed through the friends he met there. Here he would learn to truly work and exchange views with those of a different denomination.

Bethge tells us there were four special friends, two European and two American, who particularly influenced Bonhoeffer. There was Edwin Sutz who was Swiss and a talented musician, as was Bonhoeffer himself. Sutz had studied under Barth and Brunner and was responsible for enabling Bonhoeffer's later meeting with them both. During the war Sutz would provide vital contact for Bonhoeffer to the West. Jean Lasserre was a Frenchman and certainly not a natural ally of a German. He was also a pacifist. After meeting Lasserre, Bethge writes, "The question of the concrete answer to the Biblical injunction of peace and that of the concrete steps to be taken

²²⁶ *ibid.*

²²⁷ Bonhoeffer's Youth Club which included children of varied race backgrounds.

against warlike impulses never left him again...It is to him that he refers in the reference to a 'saint' in his letters from Tegel...also it was Lasserre who provided the first impulse for his great book *The Cost of Discipleship*." ²²⁸

Lasserre confronted Bonhoeffer with a working theology of priesthood in its broadest sense. He challenged Bonhoeffer in a manner which he had never previously encountered in Germany. They shared a desire to achieve the concreteness of the divine word in a secular world, and he showed Bonhoeffer that he, as its bearer, must take such a direct relationship from Word to bearer seriously, but this time in a personal as well as a social manner.

Bethge writes, "His encounter with Lasserre, this first ecumenical confrontation, transformed his academic knowledge of Lutheran ethics into a committed identification with Christ's peace teaching. He based this on the Biblical-ecumenical belief in the one body of Christ, and in succeeding years he added more and more bricks to the structure." ²²⁹

Frank Fisher, as previously mentioned became a close friend. This friendship was cemented most practically when Bonhoeffer walked out quite dismayed, along with his friend, following the refusal of a restaurant to serve a meal to Fisher as a Negro.

Finally the Lehmann's, Paul and Marion, also became great

²²⁸ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*., Collins. 1985. p112.

²²⁹ *ibid* p113.

friends of Bonhoeffer. Their home was always open to him and they enjoyed great academic debate sharing the 'Union' experience together, though Lehmann was a Reformed Churchman. Indeed it was Lehmann who arranged for Bonhoeffer's escape from Nazi Germany in 1939, with the offer of helping Bonhoeffer procure work, only to see his friend return to his arrest and subsequent death. Bethge would write "The later Bonhoeffer of *The Cost of Discipleship* and the church struggle had not forgotten what he learnt in New York. His stay in America reinforced his basic interest in the concrete reality of the word of God. His problem now was how this concreteness was to be developed, not in opposition to the law which he had made his own, but out of it." ²³⁰

Reinhold Niebuhr and John Baillie, two of his professors at Union would remember Bonhoeffer's time with them in America in this way: "He felt that political questions in which we were so interested were on the whole irrelevant to the life of a Christian. Shortly after his return to Germany he became very much interested in ethical and political issues and for a time considered going to India to study Gandhi's movement...Once very unpolitical, he became a very astute political analyst."

²³¹

This American experience did indeed have a noted effect on Bonhoeffer when he arrived back in Germany. Rather

²³⁰ *ibid* p122.

²³¹ *ibid*.

fortuitously, during the summer of 1931, he visited Karl Barth in Bonn. He greatly enjoyed the experience in Bonn and yet as Bethge states, "The warmth of Bonhoeffer's letter of thanks (to Barth) does not conceal the fact that he did not allow his confidence in the path he was following to be shaken. He believed he saw things that did not come within Barth's field of vision." ²³² His strength emanated from his new found belief structure which he learnt from Lasserre over the Sermon on the Mount, as an ethical foundation to be built upon. He himself wrote of this, saying, "...the real struggle which will perhaps arise later is bound to be simply a faithful suffering and then, then, perhaps, God will again make known his word to his Church, but until then there will have to be much faith, much prayer and much suffering. Do you know, I believe...that the whole thing is decisively expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. I believe that Barth's theology is putting it off...but he certainly made that possible for that to be seen." ²³³

At this point it is worth taking the time to reflect more closely upon the relationship between Barth and Bonhoeffer. Their first encounter, face to face was in 1931, at Bonn, when Bonhoeffer was only 25 years old and Barth twenty years his senior. Although Bonhoeffer was well acquainted with Barth's work, to Barth, Bonhoeffer was a mystery. Their meeting in Bonn prompted Bonhoeffer to write to his parents saying, "I

²³² *ibid* 141.

²³³ *ibid*.

have now met Barth and got to know him quite well at a discussion evening at his house. I liked him very much indeed, and am also very impressed by his lectures. Everything is so well worked and has not yet become mechanical to him. I think I shall gain a great deal from the time spent here." ²³⁴ At a private dinner Bonhoeffer was to observe that Barth was even better than his books, and so their relationship truly began.

Bethge tells us that, "The result of this encounter was that henceforward the relations between the two were characterized by complete frankness and when occasion arose, completely frank disagreement. A sporadic correspondence began in which neither concealed anything from the other. In the younger man's letters there was always a trace of respectful distance, but the older man respected no barriers." ²³⁵ From the time of his stay in Bonn, Bonhoeffer would meet up regularly with Barth, further deepening their relationship. These meetings, especially in 1932, Bethge tells us, were, "Strongly influenced by concern about the political future and the future of the Church, and did not leave as much time for theological discussions as he would have liked...At this time Barth and Bonhoeffer were on closer terms than ever became possible again." ²³⁶

On his return from Bonn, Bonhoeffer started working with

²³⁴ *ibid* p131.

²³⁵ *ibid* p132.

²³⁶ *ibid* p133.

Hildebrandt on a new Lutheran Catechism and within it he reiterated anti war and anti nationalist feelings. Interestingly, it was now that the *Jewish Question* began to be confronted and notably in the second draft of the catechism, Bonhoeffer wrote, "...In the Church there is neither...Jew nor German." ²³⁷ Whilst the catechism was for his own church only, Bonhoeffer would soon become involved in the greater ecumenical movement, but this time, unlike in America, in an official capacity. Bethge wrote, "His interest in the ecumenical movement was at first merely incidental, but it took such a hold on him that it became an integral part of his being...The world of the early stages of the evangelical movement came to play a vital part in his theology, his part in the church struggle, and finally in his political commitment." ²³⁸

In many ways involvement with the World Alliance of Churches, a naturally peace loving and anti nationalistic body, would bring Bonhoeffer into confrontation with the German Nationalists, who under Hirsch and Althaus issued a non cooperation statement which was published in the right wing newspapers, urging non cooperation with ecumenical activities until the war debt issue and the political settlements involved were set right. It is at this time that, Bethge says, "The Theologian becomes a Christian." ²³⁹

²³⁷ *ibid* p145.

²³⁸ *ibid* p146.

²³⁹ *ibid* p153.

At this time Bonhoeffer spoke of many things which are contained in *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together* such as community life, oral confession and daily meditation on the Bible. His attendance at church became regular, indeed he now fully associated his stance with that of the church's stance, if reformed. Following Lasserre's lead, the church would become his hope to solve the issues of National Socialism. Bonhoeffer wrote, "Then the Bible, and in particular the Sermon on the Mount, freed me from that. Since then everything has changed. I have felt this plainly, and so have others about me. It was a great liberation. It became clear to me that the life of a servant of Jesus Christ must belong to the Church, and step by step it became plainer to me how far that must go. Then came the crisis of 1933. This strengthened me in it." ²⁴⁰

Here clear links between Bonhoeffer's desire to prevent National Socialism succeeding, and the church (and indeed himself) doing something about it, can be seen. Perhaps he realised that he would himself require reforming if he was capable of facing the task? He wrote to his brother Karl Friederich on these matters, "When I first began, I imagined it quite otherwise - perhaps as a more academic matter. Now something very different has come of it. I now believe that I know at last that I am at least on the right track - for the first time in my life. And that often makes me very glad...I believe I know inwardly I shall be really clear and honest

²⁴⁰ *ibid* p155.

with myself only when I have begun to take seriously the Sermon on the Mount. That is the only source of power capable of blowing up the whole phantasmagoria (Hitler's regime) once and for all...There are things which an uncompromising stand is worth while. And it seems to me that peace and social justice, or Christ himself, are such things." ²⁴¹

The ethical dilemma of when to act and when not, now confronted Bonhoeffer. The sufficiency of the commandments, a concrete proclamation and revelation, captured specifically in the *Sermon on the Mount*, could help in concrete ethical action, being measured against Christ's teaching itself. Bonhoeffer held fast to the thought that ethical action, in response to grace, through concrete commandments, and acted upon by the church, was the thing itself. Barth however, always wary of the potentiality towards false authority, thus strengthened his eschatological implication towards the ethical and ecclesiastical situation. The concrete for Barth stood within the eschatological atmosphere. So Barth remained unhappy with Bonhoeffer's directness with the matter, especially tempered by the action of the German Christians, who in 1933, were claiming for themselves full authority of action in Christ's name.

Bonhoeffer's response at the time was to consider with Hildebrandt the thought of a *free church*, within which true authority would be held and maintained. This they hoped would

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

speak God's true Word to the world. Three things were now coming together. Bonhoeffer's faith, which had expanded spiritually under Lasserre's influence, was now becoming of a more personal nature to him, his ecumenical work was expanding on a formal nature and his opposition politically to Hitler's Germany would be caught up in the midst of it all. All three issues were fuelled by his time spent in Harlem and dealing with race issues alongside Frank Fisher and the work he was doing on a practical level in Berlin. It is to this we will now turn.

The Charlottenburg Youth Club experiment in East Berlin started in 1932, at a time when Bonhoeffer was busy lecturing in the university. Bethge writes, "Behind this idea lay his acquaintance with Harry Wood's work in New York, as well as his contact with Siegmund-Schultz and his social work in East Berlin..."²⁴² The supporters of the project set up in an area of extreme hardship, for their desire was simply to help those worst effected by the severe economic crisis. The club was of a mixed racial background, some Christian, some non Christian and some of Jewish origin. Anneliese Schnurmann became a major sponsor of the project and was from a Jewish background herself. The club was opened shortly before Hitler came to power, was popular and attracted all kinds, including communists.

Following Hitler's election success on January 30th, 1933, the

²⁴² *ibid* p171.

club was forced to shut with the communists being hounded by the Brown Shirts and indeed Anneliese had to move from Germany. Bethge concludes, "Concern for the unemployed workers now yielded to concern for another, far more deeply branded category, the Jews." ²⁴³ This question occurred in a more personal manner to Bonhoeffer over his intention to start his own ministry in East Berlin alongside his friend Franz Hildebrandt. The Aryan Clause would be extended to the church and this made Hildebrandt's appointment unlikely, because of his Jewish roots. Bonhoeffer wrote, "I know that I could not accept the ministry I had wanted unless I was willing to give up my attitude of unconditional opposition to this church, unless I were willing to model my ministry unconvincing in advance, and were willing to drop my solidarity with the Jewish Christian ministers - my closest friend is one of them and is now faced with a void." ²⁴⁴

The German Christians were now advancing. There would be Brown Shirt chaplains appointed and Swastikas appearing on altars. At this point Bonhoeffer, as a form of opposition, would join a group of theologians around the figure of Martin Niemoller and his *Emergency League of Pastors*. Bonhoeffer also took on the role of International Youth Secretary with the World Alliance of Churches. Here, he would find many like minded individuals for the cause of peace. In many ways Bonhoeffer hoped that this group itself might become a church

²⁴³ *ibid* p172.

²⁴⁴ *ibid* p173.

and it would be within this body that Bonhoeffer would meet his long time friend and ally, Dr. GKA Bell, Bishop of Chichester. George Bell would become an important friend and an ally to the Confessing Church as well.

The friendship which developed between the two men left this impression upon Bell, he writes, "I knew him in London in the early days of the evil regime: and from him, more than any other German, I learned the true character of the conflict, in an intimate friendship. I have no doubt that he did fine work with his German congregation: but he taught many besides his fellow-countrymen while a pastor in England. He was crystal clear in his convictions: and young as he was, and humble-minded as he was, he saw the truth, and spoke it with a complete absence of fear." ²⁴⁵

Bell in the summer of 1933 was President of the Ecumenical Council for Practical Christianity, in other words the nominal head of the ecumenical movement. Changes in Germany, which were proceeding against ecumenism were thus of interest to him. But the importance of Bell was not only in the field of church matters. Bell, as a Bishop, also held a seat in the House of Lords. Here he entered into the world of politics and had direct access to the government. In this position also, and quite naturally, Bell had direct access to the British public through the media. Scholder tells us that, "The most significant influence on the bishop was exercised by

²⁴⁵ Bethge E, *Bonhoeffer: An Illustrated Biography*, Fount Press. 1979. p125.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. At twenty-eight one of the clearest and most resolute supporters of the Confessing side...a first consequence of Bell's link with Bonhoeffer in January 1934 had been an unusually clear letter from Bell to Ludwig Muller in which in the name of the Ecumenical Council Bell reminded the Reich Bishop that he had promised a repeal of the Aryan paragraph and the violent measures, but that with the muzzling decree he had done just the opposite." ²⁴⁶

Bonhoeffer said, "We are not an ad hoc organisation for church action, but a definite form of the church itself...The World Alliance is the alarmed and anxious Church of Christ that has pricked up its ears...and calls upon the Lord." ²⁴⁷ Perhaps if his church could no longer help, this new community to which he belonged might do so? Here we note Bonhoeffer's first admission that the *Church of Christ* goes beyond denominationalism in a definite form for him. It does this in structure through the World Alliance of Churches, but only because it remains true to its calling and dependency upon its founder.

The problem which Bonhoeffer faced, and he would continue to combat it for the rest of his life, is that the old church institutional powers do not like to share power or control. They will maintain this through academic argument (however poor) and protect themselves against change by allying

²⁴⁶ Scholder K, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, Vol 2, SCM Press Ltd. 1987. p76.

²⁴⁷ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p189.

themselves with the relevant people of power in their society who can prevent change. This was especially true in Germany in the 1930's and it can best be expressed by Wilhelm Menn, whom Bethge claims represents the views of many German pastors. He said, "To me it is fairly understandable, because of what Jewry, by its control of the press, finance, the theatre, etc., has done to us...That justifiable collective anger, even when people's frame of mind is not specifically anti-semitic, should for once vent itself in violence. Never for a second has the black, red and gold flag had any place either in my heart or in my home. I have always been a man of the extreme right." ²⁴⁸ For the men of the right, the new Aryan legislation forbidding Christian Jews positions in the German National Church, brought in by the Nazi regime, would do their careers no harm whatsoever, provided they remained allied to the right and anti-semitism.

Bonhoeffer was a man very much left out on his own when this Aryan legislation came in on 7th April 1933, for he was one of the few who had worked out what it had really meant, both politically and ecclesiastically. He wrote, "We are in no way concerned with the question whether our members of German stock can continue to share responsibility with Jews for the communion of the Church. Rather, it is the task of the Christian proclamation to say, here, where Jew and German stand together under God's word, is the Church, here it is

²⁴⁸ *ibid* p206.

proven whether or not the Church is still the Church." ²⁴⁹ By August 1933, Bonhoeffer had concluded that he could not remain in a Church which excluded the Jews. He was now integrally involved in the struggle against Hitler and his church. The argument was now personal, for not only did it offend him theologically, but practically, his family and friends were now being persecuted.

Despite all of this Bonhoeffer, at this time, still believed that fundamentally the problem was theological and could be corrected by the action of the Church. Ten years later in prison he would believe less of this. As 1933 unravelled, Bonhoeffer's struggle would become more intense, and the question would become one of secession and confession. It all started through a group known as the *Young Reformers*, who set up in opposition to the German Christians, and their struggle came to a head in July with the Church elections which the German Christians won convincingly by unfair means. Political action now became more obvious, if still primarily in church terms. Bonhoeffer wrote, "I have been fully taken up with what has been happening in church politics...I have little doubt that the German Christians will emerge victorious and that concomitantly the outline of the new Church will soon become apparent, but it will be questionable whether we shall be able to recognise it as the Church." ²⁵⁰ By September the *Young Reformers* had become a much larger organisation, known

²⁴⁹ *ibid* p207.

²⁵⁰ *ibid* p224.

as the Pastors Emergency League. At the *Brown Synod* in September it was decided that Jewish Christians be held back from the ministry, and all ministers must give unconditional support to the National Socialist State; In response the Pastors Emergency League drafted four points of commitment, their main point being exclusion from communion of those who supported the Aryan Clause.

By the 20th October, the *League* had become official and convened a Council of Brethren, calling herself the Church of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, the *Jewish Question* would be the one which would dominate his reasoning behind him leaving his own church. Muller was elected Reichbishop of Old Prussia and the tide had turned against Bonhoeffer and his allies. Bethge wrote, "For the sake of preserving their own dioceses intact, the Lutheran Bishops had remained silent." ²⁵¹

On the 13th November 1933, the infamous Sports Palace Demonstration took place where it was declared to the German Christians that further dismissals through the immediate implementation of the Aryan Clause should now happen at speed. It called for, "Above all...liberation from the Old Testament with its Jewish money morality and from these stories of cattle dealers and pimps." ²⁵² The Church Affairs Officer and some Bishops present did not protest. In December 1933 the Church Evangelical Youth Movement was incorporated into the

²⁵¹ *ibid* p250.

²⁵² *ibid* p263.

Hitler Youth. On January 4th, 1934, Muller issued a 'muzzling decree' preventing public debate on the Aryan Church dispute, and warning of dismissal. By May, 1934, following the Barmen Declaration, the Confessing Church had emerged. Though not present himself Bonhoeffer's invisible hand was there and he would show it with his presence at Fano and the ecumenical conference.

Again, we must reassert that Bonhoeffer's primary concern was the Jewish Question throughout all of his actions, whether they be ecclesiastical or secular. All his work was concerned with such matters. Bethge writes that his own perception of the problem at hand was helped by two things, "First there was my time spent with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who from 1933 was not just concerned with the problem of Baptised Jews within the church but always saw the problem of the Jews as such, that is, anti-semitism, as the core problem of Nazism. It was important for me that I was close to him and somehow internalised and absorbed his first steps on this path. Second, there was the fact that I had come across emigrants during my time in London. I got to know their everyday lives, their great difficulty in having to change their identity, to lose the one they had in Germany and to find a new one. I saw the crises and the problems very clearly." ²⁵³

As 1934 advanced, Hitler had his former friend, Ernst Rohm,

²⁵³ Bethge E, *Friendship and Resistance, Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, WCC Publications. 1995. p12.

assassinated, (Rohm being one of those instrumentally involved in putting Hitler into power) along with a group of other well known political figures. The National Socialists then destabilised Austria by allowing the murder of Chancellor Dolfuss, and when Hindenburg died, Hitler combined the functions of Chancellor and President, into one of the *Fuhrer* of all Germans.

Church resistance had now become a form of national resistance, for the *status confessionis* from Barmen now impinged upon Hitler's notions of authority. Bonhoeffer would now be faced with a choice. He could remain working within the academic field in Berlin or take up a position teaching Confessing Church ordinands at the newly formed theological seminaries. He chose the latter and set up provisionally at Zingst before moving on to the better known Finkenwalde. Here the past would reap its fruit. The formulation of the oral confessional would enable drastic changes in training to take place, in both theological, ecclesiastical and in general lifestyle matters.

By this time the Confessing Church had revealed splits in its ranks at the Third Confessing Synod in Augsburg. Notably, the Lutherans had managed to keep Barth, who was now in Basel, away from the Synod (denominationalism rearing its ugly head once more even within a supposed non denominational environment). The Barmen and Dahlem decisions were upheld here, but now Bonhoeffer thought more needed to be said about

the Jews, for he was aware of terrible plans (through inside knowledge of the preparations being made by the Ministry of Justice and of the Interior), over whom the state would deem to be a Jew or not. He gleaned this information through his brother in law Hans von Dohnanyi, who worked in the Ministry. Bethge states, "Bonhoeffer was concerned that a protest be raised early enough to help those jurists who had scruples, as well as the future victims." ²⁵⁴

Bonhoeffer of course was dealing with such legislation on a personal front. At Finkenwalde, one of his ordinands, Gerhard Vibrans wrote in a letter to a friend that, "Here in the Finkenwalde seminary he had met for the first time three friends of Bonhoeffer (Franz Hildebrandt, Ernst Gordon, Willi Sussbach) who had been affected by anti-semitism, removed from their parish posts and beaten by the SA. Now they were asking Bonhoeffer for advice about emigrating." ²⁵⁵ The levels of confession and resistance could no longer be kept apart, with Bonhoeffer at the time preferring passive resistance, stemming from his understanding of the Sermon on the Mount and revealed by his interest in visiting Gandhi. What was to change Bonhoeffer's mind, was that he discovered that to remain with only a confession against, rather than an action for, results in the confession itself becoming rotten. The confession can only be made concrete through the action otherwise it is no confession at all.

²⁵⁴ *ibid* p23.

²⁵⁵ *ibid*.

Bethge concludes, "The church has a number of different options within the realm of resistance, from political opposition to an outright refusal to assume its mandate. Even the prayer of intercession cannot simply be taken for granted; it will do justice to the situation only if one has gathered the relevant information, analysed the situation and entered into solidarity with those concerned. If not, prayer becomes a verbal exercise in creating an alibi. The church can and must make use of its possibilities to analyse the degrees of anti-Semitism and apartheid, the violations of humanity in capitalist or socialist systems, the justification for the use of means of mass destruction or of biotechnology; and it must find ways and means to oppose them." ²⁵⁶

Bonhoeffer's method of teaching his ordinands at Finkenwalde and then latterly when he was teaching in two places, (the clandestine seminary in Pomerania, made up of *collective curateships*, and in Schlonwitz where he designed a system to allow a depth of personal spirituality) would result in responsible ministries from his pupils. The roots of these ideas can be seen clearly in *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. Thus, confession remains the central act, because it means confessing Christ, who brings God near to us, who then directs us in our action, it cannot thus worry about success or failure, it lives only by and in whom it confesses, the crucified and risen one. This unity in Christ brings an all

²⁵⁶ *ibid* p25.

of one team approach which is strengthened by living in dependency through community. The importance of a team ministry in a time of challenge and crisis for the church, upheld through a shared spiritual discipline to create true fellowship, has been recognised already in this work through my experiences on operations and in our studies of World War One chaplaincy and MacLeod's community teams. Bonhoeffer is thus following a theme which seems constant in response to responsible action by Christians when the existing church structures fail or simply cannot, bring the message of Jesus of Nazareth to the people in need.

II.2 Reichspogromnacht and a Theology of Israel

The final biographical area which I would like to look at, is the night of November 9th, 1938, when Germany experienced the *Reichspogromnacht*. This was the night when there was an obvious beginning to the physical destruction of the Jews, where, according to Heydrich's report to Goering, some 20,000 men were taken to concentration camps and marched through German streets between SS-men. By the following February, some 92 Jews had been murdered, 191 synagogues had been set alight, with the fire brigade and police taking no action, and hundreds of Torah scrolls had been desecrated and destroyed. Following this there were government orders for the *Aryanization* of Jewish property, houses, factories, shops, of which some 7,500 were destroyed and their owners were charged for the damage.

Jews were forced to sell their houses below their value and consequently some 120,000 Jews left Germany over the following months. For Bonhoeffer the matter again was a personal as well as a national one. He sent Bethge, who was now his assistant, working out of Schlonwitz, to Gottingen, to find out if anything had happened to his twin sister, Sabine, her house and family during the pogrom there. Later that year Sabine and her family (Leibholz) had to emigrate because the marking of all *non Aryan* passports was becoming a real threat.

When Bonhoeffer arrived in Koslin to teach the day after the pogrom, the following memories of that night were recorded by one of the students. "A great discussion arose among us about this deed, and how to assess it. Meanwhile Dietrich Bonhoeffer had returned. Some of us spoke of the curse which had haunted the Jews since Jesus' death on the cross. Bonhoeffer rejected this with extreme sharpness...He utterly refused to see in the destruction of the synagogues by the Nazis a fulfilment of the curse on the Jews. This was a case of sheer violence. 'If the synagogues burn today, the churches will be on fire tomorrow.'" ²⁵⁷

Bonhoeffer's reaction to that fateful night in German history perhaps gives us a clue as to his own view of both exegesis and ethic. He believed that the Bible really was God's Word to us in the concrete, through the very nature of revelation.

²⁵⁷ *ibid* p62.

It addressed the here and now in the specific. The Old Testament was just as much a part of this as the New. In his Bible, Bonhoeffer marked a date beside Psalm 74:8, "9.11.38" with an exclamation mark and several lines against the following verses: "They said to themselves, 'We will utterly subdue them'; they burned all the meeting places of God in the land. We do not see our emblems; there is no longer any prophet, and there is no one among us who knows how long. How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand; why do you keep your hand in your bosom?" (Psalm 74:8) Bethge tells us that this is significant because at no other time did Bonhoeffer mark his Bible in such a manner. This pogrom had changed things.

The Confessing Church was now being put under huge pressures by the Nazi administration. An oath of loyalty would be required of the church towards the State. This of course compromised the church, causing internal struggle over the legalisation, thus creating a rift in the ranks. As regards a *Theology of Israel*, Bonhoeffer made a significant change of thought in 1938. Not only did the pogrom affect him personally through his twin sister, but some members of his community at Finkenwalde were imprisoned during Advent.²⁵⁸ Bethge tells us, "One of them was Bonhoeffer's close colleague Fritz Onnasch, whom he had visited in his cell in Stettin, and

²⁵⁸ see Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p659f.

the visit had affected him deeply." ²⁵⁹

Thus in his 1938 Christmas message to the community, Bonhoeffer wrote, "During the last few days I have been thinking a lot about Psalm 74, Zechariah 2:8, Romans 9:3f, and 11:11-15. That really makes one pray." ²⁶⁰ Bethge tells us that this viewpoint was quite extraordinary, even within the Confessing Church, as we have seen from some of the reactions at the Seminary to November 9th. The texts are not being used exegetically, they are being used as a direct Word from God to those facing the situation of November 1938. The invitation to examine these texts was as an invitation to pray for what Bethge calls 'daring'. Not daring against the Gestapo but rather 'daring' to associate oneself with the Jews and to usurp the natural anti-Semitic attitudes prevalent in Germany and her churches by the late 1930's. Goldhagen take note!

It is a call to redemption, as can be seen when Bonhoeffer reads Romans 9:3f "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises." This passage was indeed used previously. One example can be found in the statements surrounding the Bethel Confession in 1933. However, when the statements about the Jews were watered and dropped out of the final version, Bonhoeffer refused to sign the Confession.

²⁵⁹ Bethge E, *Friendship and Resistance, Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, WCC Publications. 1995. p66.

²⁶⁰ *ibid* p65.

Fundamentally, Bonhoeffer is questioning the church's teaching, which had forgotten about Paul's statement in Romans 11:11-15, where Paul bears witness to Israel's final acceptance as when she receives, "life from the dead." Thus Israel will be reconciled with the God of the final commandment. For Bonhoeffer then the Jews are a continuing *people of God*. So the gauntlet was thrown down to all Christians. What the Nazis were doing was a direct act against God's people. In 1940, in his *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer thus wrote, "A rejection of the Jews from the West must bring after it a rejection of Christ, for Christ was a Jew." ²⁶¹

II.3 Resistance

One cannot underestimate Bonhoeffer's personal involvement with the struggle for the Jews. As we have already seen, his family through his twin sister's marriage and many of his friends were being directly persecuted. Through his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, with whom he was close, Bonhoeffer learnt of plans for a coup, following the annexation of Austria in 1938. The 74th Psalm's "How long?" could even have been interpreted positively.

The Confessing Church, as we have already noted, had had its position particularly weakened. Following the annexation of Austria, the official state church had ordered all pastors to

²⁶¹ *ibid* p67.

take an oath of allegiance to Hitler as a birthday present. Most of the Confessing Church pastors took the oath. Those who refused formed up as a remnant of the church and were called the *Bruderrat*.

In the late summer, the official, or intact Confessional Church, disassociated itself from the *Bruderrat* following their publication of a liturgy with penitential prayers for peace. The weekly SS-paper, *Schwarzes Korps*, attacked them for being unpatriotic. Finally, the *Bruderrat* then cut their links with Karl Barth because of his call to arms against Hitler, with the call being made in the name of the Church of Jesus Christ. To be seen to be associated with someone who had called for war on ones own kind, was a step too far. Thus the *How long* could be a long one, if one waited for the Church to give an appropriate answer. Bonhoeffer would find his answer in his meditations on the Bible and through his prayers. Now there would be a call for individual responsibility.

In the summer of 1939, Bonhoeffer returned to America with the promise of work by the Lehmanns. He would not have been redundant. When, however he discovered that by accepting work in the United States, he would have been taking away a work permit from a Jewish immigrant, he decided to return home. On his return, Bonhoeffer formulated a confession of guilt, which Bethge claims had originated out of his thoughts on Psalm 74 and his circular letter to his students. The confession

contained this excerpt, "The church confesses to having seen the irrational use of brutal violence, the physical and spiritual suffering of innumerable innocent people, oppression, hate and murder, without having raised its voice on their behalf, without having found a way to hasten to their aid. It has become responsible for destroying the lives of the weakest and most defenceless brothers of Jesus Christ." ²⁶² Bonhoeffer wrote this before Auschwitz and his involvement in saving Jewish people from the chambers through the auspices of U7, the Abwehr group of individuals around Admiral Canaris and Hans von Dohnanyi, for whom Bonhoeffer would work. Bethge notes that such an honest confession was not reached by the German Church in the Stuttgart Confession of guilt in 1945, even after the full events of the holocaust had come to light. Bonhoeffer again revealed that he was a man ahead of his time.

The public answer to the *How long*, of course came with the failure of the coup to assassinate Hitler, in July 1944, but even then the result, as we can see from his letter from Tegel, on July 21st, is still one of hope. It is best summarised in the last line of his poem *Stations on the Road to Freedom*, when he writes, "Freedom, how long we have sought thee, in discipline, action, suffering; dying we now may behold thee revealed in the Lord." ²⁶³ Thus, this action and death was the concrete confession of and liberation from his country's complicity in the murder of the Jews. In his essay

²⁶² *ibid* p69.

²⁶³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p371.

After Ten Years, Bonhoeffer wrote, "We still love life, but I do not think that death can take us by surprise now. After what we have been through during the war, we hardly dare admit that we should like death to come to us, not accidentally and suddenly through some trivial cause, but in the fullness of life and with everything at stake. It is we ourselves, and not outward circumstances, who make death what it can be, a death freely and voluntarily accepted." ²⁶⁴

So Bethge concludes that Bonhoeffer's near unique *Theology of Israel*, which arose out of his personal involvement with the Jewish people through his family, his close friends and out of his renewed reading of the Old and New Testaments as one, as a direct Word from God to us, thus resulted in his actions of resistance from that fateful night on November 9th, 1938 onwards. It would produce thoughts such as a *non religious interpretation* and *religionless Christianity* and a new model shape for the organisation of a post war church. They would be written down in a prison cell in Berlin.

III. THE THEOLOGY OF ACTION

Eberhard Bethge gives us some insight into the fundamental motivations behind Bonhoeffer's research into *religion* when he states, "In the Union Seminary Quarterly Review the Swiss Henry Mottu once pointed out, how in the end, Bonhoeffer's theology is dominated by, and remains in a continual

²⁶⁴ *ibid* p16.

discussion with, Feuerbach's unanswered questions about the truth and the reality of talking about God. We actually find in Bonhoeffer's first Berlin lecture of 1931 the following sentences 'Feuerbach put two questions to theology which remain unanswered: 1. about the truth of her propositions, 2. about their relevance to real life.'" ²⁶⁵

For Bethge, Bonhoeffer's life and actions would best be understood in the context of answering the questions set above. Bonhoeffer would ask these questions, "Positively, presupposing Christ as present. He did not start a discussion on the necessity and usefulness of this presence, but he discussed the fact of this presence, and who Christ is for us today." ²⁶⁶ This stance taken from his Christological structure, is one in which he throws much weight of argument, but we must understand that there is more to it than that, for, as mentioned before, his Christology itself comes (like Studdert Kennedy) from the very heart of his faith.

This brings the topic of ministry into the foreground. It would be amiss, amongst much theological discussion whilst dealing with the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to lose sight of his professed calling in life. Bethge understands this part of Bonhoeffer's life better than anyone else, especially so, since they first met when Bonhoeffer was training him to serve as a pastor with the Confessing Church through the

²⁶⁵ Bethge E. *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr*, Collins. 1967. p137.

²⁶⁶ *ibid* p138.

colleges at Zingst and Finkenwalde.

In 1935, Bethge remembers, "From the beginning to the end of his life Bonhoeffer lived with the social, institutional and theological crisis of the ministry. He was deeply concerned about its external and internal authenticity, and devoted the gifts of his body, intellect and character in order to grasp the crisis at its core and turn it to positive effect..." ²⁶⁷

Thus, Bonhoeffer, once the identity of his vocation was established as a *given*, having been derived from a transcendent source, set aside all questions of personal authenticity, and never again questioned it in a way that might have cancelled it from his personal and theological presuppositions. This was especially true at the end of his life when he struggled with the task of the so-called *non-religious interpretation* of the Gospel. Even then, he never questioned the validity of his vocation.

Bethge would go on to become an even closer friend of Bonhoeffer. Firstly he would join the smaller community, within a community at Finkenwalde, known as the *House of Brethren*, and then he would remain with Bonhoeffer at Finkenwalde until its closure in 1937. Thereafter he became Bonhoeffer's assistant in training candidates, this time, under the secretive and disguised form of two separate collective pastorates, until March 1940. Bethge states "Thus I was uninterruptedly associated with Bonhoeffer's work of

²⁶⁷ *ibid* p80.

training for the Confessing Church and with the history of the latter." ²⁶⁸

With regard to Bonhoeffer's motivation to write from prison about the subject of *religion*, Bethge poses the question, "To whom did he write? Bonhoeffer did not send the letters and the outline of his manuscript to the world at large, nor even to his Church; he shared his thoughts with a theological friend in the Confessing Church. Certainly he had planned a book which one day might open a responsible discussion with many people. But what we have was addressed to a very limited circle of people who understood his world that it was of age and religionless; he did not envisage a vast programme. In a far more modest way he wished to prepare a few ministers for a new situation in their Church, when the phenomenon of religionlessness and the loss of privilege would have to be faced." ²⁶⁹

At the conclusion to the *Outline of a Book*, Bonhoeffer writes to Bethge saying, "I hope it may be of some help for the church's future." ²⁷⁰ Thus Bonhoeffer, under his own admission, is writing for the good of his church to help both himself and his friends, (most of whom he taught) to better cope with a ministry in a secular age. What we will notice, later on, was that he did this with a *Theology of Israel* at the forefront of his mind.

²⁶⁸ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. pxvii.

²⁶⁹ Bethge E, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr*, Collins. 1967. p140.

²⁷⁰ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p383.

III.1 Religion

Edwin Robertson writes, "Religion is a foreboding word, threatening and promising at the same time. It tells of rules and regulations which must be kept and of a God who acts justly, rewarding and punishing according to the way in which the rules and regulations are kept or not. The word means, literally, binding back. It is derived from two Latin parts: ligo - to bind; re - back. It is a word of restraint. In most religions, the restraint is on both God and man. When the rules are properly kept, the God is obliged to perform. A more sophisticated attitude to God develops in the higher religions, but the word keeps its basic meaning of restraint."²⁷¹

For Andre Dumas, the French theologian²⁷², the word religion is derived from two sources also. He chooses relegare, to bind or to fasten, and relegere, which means to cultivate or gather. As with Robertson, Dumas finds the word religion difficult when used to describe biblical faith. Dumas sees the term as one which fits more neatly into ancient Greek and Latin thought, rather than Hebraic. He argues that in the Latin and Greek societies, religion represented poetic and mythical theogonies, as part of a philosophical system which involved also logic and physics.

²⁷¹ Robertson E, *Bonhoeffer's Heritage*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1989. p55.

²⁷² see Dumas A, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, SCM Press Ltd. 1971. p174-178.

Dumas states that it can also mean straight forward worship of the emperor. Religion was thus a plural concept, which included activities such as observances of religious festivals through ceremony which included responsibility to the head of the house or indeed of the city or state. In this way, man would be either binding himself or his people to the gods, "By vows or even bandages (cf *relegare*, to bind); he also paid respect to the gods (cf *relegere* in the sense of to recollect, to recall, almost the equivalent of *colere*, to take pains)".²⁷³

For the Greeks such ceremony could be played out within the theatre. Perhaps the most famous religious festival was the Dionysia, a celebration of the god Dionysus, which took place every spring time in 5th Century BC Athens. Here the god would be honoured in theatre by tragedy, comedy, dance and song. The statue of the god would be brought into the theatre for the performances and the priests would have their seats reserved.

The city would virtually shut down for four days during the festival and the poets would have a ratings competition which could make or break their careers. Something similar to our present day competition over Christmas T.V. ratings! The importance of the festival can be judged by the official status which was given to it. The festival of Dionysus, was first given official status by Pisistratus in the 6th Century BC and it became even more popular under the democratic system

²⁷³ *ibid* p175.

a century later. The performances themselves were said to cause states of ecstatic possession and thus the theatre was thought of as a form of sacramental arena, where performances by both actors and audiences were in fact forms of worship themselves.

Robert Parker writes, "To understand the place of religion in Greek society we must think away the religious institution of our experience, the Church. In Greece, power in religious matters lay with those who had secular power; in the household with the father, in early communities with the King, in developed city-states with the magistrates or even with the citizen assembly. In Athens, it was a magistrate who impersonated the god Dionysus in an important ritual of sacred marriage, and decisions about the use of sacred monies or land were taken by the democratic assembly." ²⁷⁴

In this society individual gods had their priests, but this was part-time and needed no qualifications. There was no form of body that collected them together as a whole, in fact the only professional religious men were the seers, who were understood to be interpreters of the divine will. In this manner could they come into conflict with the secular authorities. There could be no heretics, for there was no orthodoxy, no moral guidance given, for the religion was one of personal duty.

²⁷⁴ Parker R, *The Oxford History of the World*, Oxford Press Ltd. 1989. p453.

How then does such a concept of religion compare to the Old Testament's account and activities? Dumas states, "In the Old Testament, faith in the Word of Yahweh was opposed to all the surrounding religions, whether these were cults of earthly fertility, celestial astrology, veneration of the beyond or deification of the king. Yahweh forbade his people to create gods from human mysteries of procreation or mortality, since the true God, Yahweh is creator, not procreator."²⁷⁵ God is the Living God who is neither immortal on this side of death nor re-born in the thereafter. We are not to be surprised then, when we hear the words from the Old Testament saying (Is44:9-20) that the idols which men make for themselves have eyes, ears and hands that can do nothing, for though they are visible they are powerless, whilst Yahweh though invisible is indeed all powerful. Out of this Alan Richardson would conclude, "The worship of Jehovah was not one of the religions of the Fertile Crescent. It implied the abolition of religion as the ancient world understood it."²⁷⁶

Yahweh would be encountered on Sinai, yet he was invisible; rather than being absent and visible, as in the case of Baal and the golden calf. The One who speaks, is the One who approaches, the founder and partner of a covenant. The closest they could get to describing Yahweh is in Exodus 4:14 "I am who I am." Thus, is a covenant established where people walk daily with God. Meek, the Old Testament scholar writes,

²⁷⁵ Dumas A, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, SCM Press. 1971. p176.

²⁷⁶ *ibid* p177.

"Throughout the Old Testament, the destiny of Israel is shown to be constantly shaped by the hands of the Almighty - Elohim or Yahweh - and this interpretation places the modern theologian in a great quandary. Even when, like the author of this book, he is convinced of the real presence of the hand of God in these events, he must still write his history of Israel in non-theological terms." ²⁷⁷

This problem did not escape Bonhoeffer, and we will see later how he dealt with such matters. Dumas does point out however, that for the New Testament, *primitive Christianity*, is not a form of *religion*, and never understood itself as such. In turn, he argues that Bonhoeffer picked up on this notion and followed it through. Dumas writes, "The One who thus speaks is Yahweh, the founder and partner of the covenant, who sent his Son, not as a religious demi-god but as an ordinary man, to live, work and die, in order to raise him up as the one who had earned the reward of such freely-given obedience, being raised up physically (neither metaphysically nor spiritually) beyond mortality. Primitive Christianity was thus not a religion, because it refuses to be part of the idolatrous extension of nature worship or the gnostic preoccupation with the beyond." ²⁷⁸

So, Dumas is suggesting that the early Christians refused to use a religious language to account for their faith. The word

²⁷⁷ Meek MA, *A Short History of Israel*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1963. p12.

²⁷⁸ Dumas A, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, SCM Press Ltd. 1971. p177.

religion (threskia :greek) only appears three times in the New Testament, favourably in James 1.26, then in Col 12.18, with regard to a discussion about the gnostic cult of angels, and Acts 26.5, in a discussion about the rigidity of the Pharisees. The greek word eusebia, which stands for an inner religious life, appears more frequently than the above term threskia which stands for outward ceremony. It occurs in 1&2 Timothy, Titus and four times in 2Peter, it is also contained in Acts 3.12 where the faith of the new community is described as being likened to religion, (in the ancient sense) that is, veneration of the supernatural, it occurs also in Acts 17.22 & 25.19, in a manner which does not praise such activity. Dumas concludes, "All along the line the New Testament avoids the vocabulary based on pagan notions of religion...it spoke not of religion but of faith." ²⁷⁹

III.2 Barth and Religion

Dumas tells us that, "The theological relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth was very deep, even though they only met a few times. The human relationship was cordial and the spiritual relationship was trusting and close. Bonhoeffer never studied under Barth. He only heard him lecture during a two-week session at Bonn in July 1931, after he had already published *Sanctorum Communio*, and Barth had defended his second dissertation *Act and Being*." ²⁸⁰ However close or not

²⁷⁹ Dumas A, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Theologian of Reality*, SCM Press Ltd, 1971. p176.

²⁸⁰ *ibid* p19.

the men may have been, Karl Barth undoubtedly influenced Bonhoeffer's notion of *religion* as can be seen in his high praise of Barth in the *letters*.

According to Feil, Bonhoeffer followed Barth in his entire argument on *religion* when the subject was debated at the early stage. If we look at Barth's statements we can perhaps see the similarities. In 1919, he first published *Romerbrief*, where as Feil states, "The discussion of religion is extensive." ²⁸¹ Religion is seen as the prefiguration of revelation, doomed to failure because for Barth, it is God alone who reveals and thus saves.

Feil states, "Religion is often mentioned in connection with circumcision, as it is in Bonhoeffer's. What is religion (Barth)? Nothing! One psychological fact among others. But it has to cry out that we belong to God now because of what God has done for us...on their own, divorced from the living movement of God's coming world circumcision, religion and church mean just as little as does religious ethical individuality." ²⁸²

One could argue that this would fit neatly into Bonhoeffer's thoughts on religion and partiality, religion being a preliminary step which is superseded by salvation in Christ. What we do not know, however, is whether Bonhoeffer ever read

²⁸¹ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965, p162.

²⁸² *ibid* p163.

Der Romerbrief, first edition. We do know, however, that he read the second edition of 1922. In this book, in the chapter entitled "The Meaning of Religion", the Pauline problem of law is understood entirely in the context of *religion*, Barth writes, "Why not proclaim ourselves one with the company of healthy mystics of all ages, and set forth the secret of a true supernatural religion running at all points paralleled to natural religion?...the answer is simply God forbid, (because grace)...is never a possibility of religion. Grace is the divine possibility of men and women and, as such, lies beyond all human possibility." ²⁸³

The meaning of *religion* for Barth can be further understood when he says, "We have now discovered its meaning to be that, our whole, concrete and observable existence is sinful. The meaning of religion is to disclose the dominion of sin over the people of this world: even religious persons are sinners, exactly they, exactly as religious persons." ²⁸⁴

For that reason, *religion* is also our greatest enemy. By being a reflector not a representative of the divine, we are made aware of what we lack most. It is precisely *religion*, which, calling us to God does not lead us to God and for that reason tears us apart. Like the Pauline notion of God's law, which came from God, but is now no longer the sign of salvation, religion for Barth, is now entirely in the

²⁸³ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965. p163.

²⁸⁴ *ibid* p164.

negative.

In Barth's *Church Dogmatics* under the heading 'The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion', Barth protested strongly against a subordination of revelation to religion, but he also states, "God is present in his revelation, in the world of human religion." ²⁸⁵ Barth has now moved out from his attitude in the second edition of *Romerbrief* and has discovered that one can speak of *religion* as being 'justified', indeed even perhaps a form of *true religion*.

He writes, "We can speak of the truth of the Christian religion only within the doctrine of justificatio impii." ²⁸⁶ Barth thus speaks of religion dialectically as being both true and yet false, in the same way as being justified and yet a sinner. He states, "The dialectic of revelation and religion leads to true religion. Faith is related to religion as Gospel is to law. Therefore, religion must not be negated and left behind, since both are given to us in dialectical unity with the gospel." ²⁸⁷

Here, Feil quite rightly points out that Bonhoeffer's thoughts cannot be related necessarily to either *Church Dogmatics* or as stated earlier in the first edition of *Romerbrief*, so their influence upon him must be thought of as slight. However, Bonhoeffer did read Barth's *The Word of God and the Word of*

²⁸⁵ *ibid* p126.

²⁸⁶ *ibid* p166.

²⁸⁷ *ibid*.

Man²⁸⁸ and he did extensively quote from the *Romerbrief* 1922 edition, which we can see in his first work, *Sanctorum Communio*²⁸⁹ and also in his last works written from Tegel prison. Feil states that in 1926 ²⁹⁰Bonhoeffer even then was going beyond Barth, for in his lectures from 1925, religion is referred to in terms of particularity and thus is incorporated into being another sphere of the world. It thus is relegated into penultimate rather than ultimate time and is therefore not the *thing itself*.

Perhaps the most important point to note, is that whether Barth truly understood *religion* in the manner represented above is largely irrelevant, in as much as we are only concerned in this debate over the matter of Bonhoeffer's understanding of Barth and what he took from it. It is to that topic we shall now turn.

III.3 Bonhoeffer and Religion

Perhaps the most notable occasion when Bonhoeffer mentions religion, was during a holiday with his brother Klaus in 1924, when they visited Rome, Sicily and for a short while Libya. Without doubt, the young Bonhoeffer was influenced a great deal by this trip. Rome gave Bonhoeffer a vision for the church which he previously did not have, a church that perhaps, because of its grandness and size, indeed its very

²⁸⁸ see Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p50.

²⁸⁹ see Bonhoeffer D, *Sanctorum Communio*, Collins. 1963. p226-7.

²⁹⁰ see Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965. p167.

catholicity as he saw it, belonged to all of the people.

This splendour of Rome would even be remembered in his letter from Tegel.²⁹¹ Bonhoeffer wrote of this experience saying that, "In Islam today everyday life and religion are not kept separate, as they are in the whole of the church, including the Catholic Church. With us one goes to church and when one comes back an entirely different kind of life begins again...Islamic and Jewish piety must be very definitely religions of law if national and ritual factors are so intermingled or actually identical. Only so are they able to maintain their strict demarcation from others." ²⁹²

From an early stage therefore it can be seen that Bonhoeffer is seeking a system in which religion means something, which is his problem with Western Christianity. He notes that this leads us forward to notions of being on the boundaries, when Christ must necessarily be at the centre. If religion is not to be a sphere of existence (a hobby) but rather the source of life itself then surely that source will be recognised in the manner people lead their lives on a daily basis? Bonhoeffer noted this especially in his time as the Lutheran curate in Barcelona.

It would also be the reason why Bonhoeffer in his essay *After Ten Years*, written Christmas 1943, would ask "Who stands

²⁹¹ Bonhoeffer D. *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*. SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p194.

²⁹² Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p38.

fast...Only the man whose final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God - the responsible man who tries to make his whole life an answer to the question and call of God. Where are these responsible people?" ²⁹³

In a lecture from July 1925 when Bonhoeffer states, "The Christian religion stands or falls by belief in divine revelation that became historically real, tangible and visible - that is, to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear." ²⁹⁴ Obviously Bonhoeffer is referring here for the necessity of faith in the argument, but at this stage he is merely responding in a somewhat typical Barthian manner towards the liberal position. What we do find above though, are the seeds of his desire to establish Christianity as being a justified way of living, that is necessarily so, because of the claim in its message that it is at the centre of the world's life.

Bonhoeffer's doctoral thesis, *Sanctorum Communio*, was published in 1930 and was primarily concerned with notions of a religious community. The work was heavily influenced by both Barth and Seeberg, the latter being Bonhoeffer's tutor, who was of liberal outlook in contrast to Barth. As will be shown below there is always a tension in Bonhoeffer's thought

²⁹³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p4/5.

²⁹⁴ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins. 1985. p56.

which would continue into his letters, for Bonhoeffer always wanted to satisfy, and most likely answer their respective questions and outlooks equally well, taking into account the fact that he could see both sides of the argument.

For Feil, the important characteristic of religion in *Sanctorum Communio* is individualism. He writes, "In the context of the sociology of religion Bonhoeffer defined religion as the touching of the human will by the divine, and the overcoming of the former by the latter with the resultant free action, it follows then that in religion an intention directed to religious community is not established in principle." ²⁹⁵

Feil argues that such individualistic thoughts reveal Seeberg's shadow and yet Barth can be seen clearly, when Bonhoeffer writes, (ref. Christianity) "This was not a new religion seeking new adherents which is a picture drawn by a later time. But God established the reality of the church, of humankind pardoned in Jesus Christ. Not religion, but revelation, not a religious community, but the church; that is what is the reality of Jesus." ²⁹⁶ Again genuine Christianity is what Bonhoeffer is chasing where individual choice is made as a result of the action of God in his revelation of Jesus Christ and this results in the church, becoming a collective group of such individuals. Christ's

²⁹⁵ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965. p168.

²⁹⁶ *ibid* p168.

realm is thus being restricted in a way in which Bonhoeffer will identify in his later works, when of course his faith and understanding of belief will have altered, as would his understanding of the church itself.

In 1928, Bonhoeffer became the Lutheran curate in Barcelona for a year, as mentioned above, and here he enjoyed the opportunity to preach often. For this period, it is important to note that Bonhoeffer would speak both very harshly about religion and then again speak of it as being one of the most holy acts.²⁹⁷ The paradox of this stance, (which we have seen stems from his thesis and perhaps the external influences upon his thoughts) can best be shown with these words, "To be religious means to understand that one will never be religious; to have God means to see that one can never have him. The people of Israel now had to discover that religion either led to salvation or to perdition, that there is no neutrality in it." ²⁹⁸ The problem with this however, is that one may never receive salvation, for Man's ways and God's ways permanently remain apart.

In *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer started on his journey to establish the connection between *religion* and *revelation of faith*. Barth's *non capax infiniti* was problematic for Bonhoeffer on Christological grounds and the background to this debate starts as far back as 1924, when as an eighteen

²⁹⁷ *ibid* .

²⁹⁸ *ibid* p231.

year old Bonhoeffer arrived at Berlin University and studied under Karl Holl. Holl would stress in his lectures the so called *young Luther* stance and the major differences between Bonhoeffer and Barth can thus be understood. They are denominational, the difference between a Reformed theology and a Lutheran one as mentioned before when considering earlier models of church government. The point to realise, as far as the *religious* debate is concerned, is that Bonhoeffer in his early years and in his thesis, understood Christ as existing as community, within the community of the church. By the end however, Bonhoeffer would drop the ecclesiological influence and speak of, Christ existing solely for others. Importantly then for this thesis, is the fact that, for Bonhoeffer, the church exists where there are people of faith and in their various communities. For Christ necessarily exists for them, He is not bound to and a servant of religious institutions.

Another theological difference between Barth and Bonhoeffer, was their philosophical support structures. For Bonhoeffer, the early influence was Reinhold Seeberg who taught him systematics in Berlin and was Bonhoeffer's supervisor for his thesis *Sanctorum Communio*. Seeberg was heavily influenced by Hegel and Schopenhauer, and whilst Bonhoeffer did not fully stand with Seeberg, the Hegelian influence strongly rubbed off. In *Act and Being* itself, Rades explains, "The dichotomy of act and being, of actus reflectus and actus directus, of ontology and transcendentalism was to be overcome through the church. As indicated in *Sanctorum Communio* only in the church

this dichotomy would cease to exist. The dichotomy, the dialectics of church and faith has to be overcome and the solution is again the solution offered in *Sanctorum Communio*, Christ existing as community." ²⁹⁹

Barth however, had based his work on neo-kantianism or using Bonhoeffer's terminology, transcendentalism. Barth's abstract theological thinking, as Bonhoeffer called it, was not satisfying for him. Bonhoeffer claimed that the freedom of God, seen in connection with revelation, is not an abstract aseity of God in the first place. It is, and here we are again in the centre of his Christology, a free act of God, having bound, having committed himself freely to the historical human being, to you and me. This is God's free commitment to us in Christ. God restricted God's own freedom in Christ in history. Revelation is connected with history, is connected with a certain time, it is not a timeless event anymore.

Rades quite clearly believes that Barth is using a logical argument, yet one which disregards the historicity of revelation. The difference then, is one of dialectical Christology to dialectical theology. Bonhoeffer reveals his Hegelian roots by speaking of Christ as the centre or middle of time, related to us through his church and directing us to Himself as the eschatological future. However, Barth's Neo-

²⁹⁹ Rades J, *Bonhoeffer's Christology*, St. Mary's College, St. Andrews University. p8.

Kantian model, remains transcendentalist and therefore distant in terms of concrete revelation.

The individualistic liberal standpoint, was criticised by Bonhoeffer as well. He claimed that it could not maintain his demand for genuineness or as he would later say *concreteness*. Again this takes us back to his argument against Barth and the precise nature of revelation in time through Christ. However, what he does state is this, "It must be plainly said that within the communion of Christ, faith takes shape in religion, that therefore religion is here called faith, that, as I look on Christ, I may and must say for my consolation, I believe only to add, of course, as I turn to look on myself; help thou my unbelief." ³⁰⁰

Feil states that the above dialectic shows Bonhoeffer's attempt to ensure that religion is truly the identification of faith and world, which would thus avoid one falling into the Barthian failing of actualism and the worldliness of it, as Bonhoeffer understood it. This is where faith is not like Bonhoeffer's favourite giant Antaeus, *touching both feet on the ground*. Perhaps again, the important point to note is that religion, if Christ inspired, is indeed faith and the Christocentric nature of the revelation gives it substance or worldliness.

What this in effect means, is that, Bonhoeffer's critique of

³⁰⁰ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965. p170.

religion comes from a different source. Barth's critique is that religion is both experience and morally based, which must then be overcome by the critique of the Word of God, whereas Bonhoeffer's critique is on the genuineness of the thing. The religion he criticised (I'm sure along with the rest of his family) was one of individualism and partiality, which Bonhoeffer recognised when visiting Rome. Bonhoeffer's answer to the problem, though he would use Barthian terms, would be thus Christological, in order to maintain its genuineness, which at the time was an academic rather than a spiritual answer.

Feil states, "The christological element emerged clearly in the address 'Thy Kingdom Come', where Bonhoeffer protested against the religion of secularism and provincialism. In both these forms of religion the relation of Christian faith to the world is debased, because God's kingdom, the kingdom of Christ as God's kingdom here on the cursed ground is rejected. This signals another highly significant characteristic of religion as Bonhoeffer saw it, one that was quite contrary to Barth's concept: a false understanding of and a wrong relation to the world, both of which were seen to be aspects of particularity, the latter indicating the division of faith and the world as the co-ordination of religion into all other areas of life. Bonhoeffer concluded that in view of this division there is no access from the religious sphere to the world, and since such a division is in fact unworkable, it leads inevitably to all areas of life being mixed together. No religious

understanding of the world leads us to the real world but at best to a phantom world." ³⁰¹

Bonhoeffer's most explicit attempt to explain his Christology, were his lectures delivered in Berlin in 1933. These documents, published following his death, would in fact be the last document of his university career. What we have today is thus merely a collection of notes taken from these classes by one of his students. The important point to note is that Bonhoeffer in these lectures followed closely his pattern from *Act and Being*. In the second chapter, Christ is seen as the *Word, Sacrament and the Church*. Christ is the centre of human existence, of history between God and nature.

Bonhoeffer's critique of other Christologies in the second chapter is not highly regarded by Feil, especially in description and facts. Indeed Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth's Christology, for Feil, falls foul of the same accusation. However, correct or not, here we are merely attempting to understand how Bonhoeffer came to understand his *non-religious* thought.

On that note then let us turn to Bonhoeffer's statement, "The proletarian can state Church no Jesus yes." ³⁰² The whole super structure of the church has now vanished in this statement. The point of course, for Bonhoeffer, is that the proletarian

³⁰¹ *ibid* p171.

³⁰² Bonhoeffer D, *Christology*, SCM Press Ltd. 1965. p3

considers Christ seriously whereas often the church does not. The church may call him the Son of God religiously, yet it does not mean it. At least the proletarian who claims Christ as a good man, recognises goodness. Such a move is noteworthy, since we can see development in thought from *Act and Being* towards a more worldly interpretation even in 1933. This move was of course noted in chapter two when discussing the love of *Tommy* for Christ but not his church. It is the cry of the un-churched!

For Bonhoeffer the necessary move thus becomes from good man to knowing Him as Christ. This is what the *non-religious interpretation* is aimed at. Within this argument, Bonhoeffer shows his dislike for docetism as an answer. Christ was a real person who died on the cross. In this manner was He God's Son. Such concreteness would later be viewed as Christ sharing in the sufferings of others during Hitler's purges. Bonhoeffer's Christological structure, identifies Christ at the centre of the suffering, his aim being to show that Christ, (the who of the Christological search) is in, and can only be found in, the middle of human history. To speak to the agnostic, there are thus not two kingdoms, but one, His Kingdom. Christ thus is found in the middle of reality, which means for Bonhoeffer, word, sacrament, church and community.

Bonhoeffer, in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, takes his Christological focus from earlier times and locates it through the *Sermon on the Mount*. In many ways the *Sermon*, becomes his

focus for Christ's word to us, exactly because it commands us to love one another. This in turn creates the new community which Bonhoeffer desired. As many were at the time showing greater and greater allegiance to a demi-teutonic god, Bonhoeffer emphasised the incarnate One as the only solution. By the time Bonhoeffer started work on his unfinished *Ethics*, Christ's sphere had moved out from community towards eternity. In Christ, history becomes united, for through Christ, God has united all of creation through a concrete moment, and the rest of history becomes relational from that point hence.

The unity of that reality emerges through faith in Christ. Here, Bonhoeffer's Christology is claiming the world for Christ and moving beyond Christian community. The man for others is also the man for eternity. All takes its place in and through Him, the world and God are linked through Him. What Bonhoeffer is claiming is that Christ is inherently involved in reality, for it is established through Him, this then pushes one away from religious ghetto's. It also claims all of the world for Christ.

Finally, we will now consider Bonhoeffer's, *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Christologically, and with regard to religion, the letters reflect little change from Bonhoeffer's stance of 1933. Bonhoeffer, in his quest to find out, "Who Christ really is for us today?" ³⁰³ finds greater meaning in the

³⁰³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p279.

suffering and the humiliated Christ rather than the resurrected One. Christ proclaimed by the gospel is the crucified One who is involved in difficulties of the present life. Such analogy argues against the *deus ex machina* and locates Christ in reality. Such identification allows for man-kind to form full relationships with God through Christ and indeed learn to live as full persons before God.

But what of the term *religion*? Where now does that once intense subject fit in, especially in light of the Christocentric nature of the debate? Well, as shown earlier, Bonhoeffer's earliest opposition to *religion*, followed Barth, being understood as a means to ones own justification. By the time Bonhoeffer reached Tegel, Feil states that, "Bonhoeffer stressed the failure of religion to provide an appropriate understanding of the world a failure that arises from disregard for Gods kingdom as the kingdom of Christ on earth. Barth had spoken analogously of the relation between revelation and religion, and the dialectic of gospel and law; Bonhoeffer on the other hand, spoke of religion as the antagonist of Jesus Christ and his church. For that reason Bonhoeffer did not ask whether or not there is a true religion; he also made practically no comment about the abolition of religion. What is encountered in Bonhoeffer's work is a systematic polemic against religion in the sense of Barth's dialectics, apart from some early adaptations of that view. Yet religion did claim Bonhoeffer's attention again... religion is not the necessary form which revelation assumes

when it is encountered by people." ³⁰⁴

The question as mentioned then, was asked by Bonhoeffer in prison, but at this time for different reasons. We have seen in Bonhoeffer's Christology, a system developing in terms of complete incarnational identification of Christ (hence God) to the world and indeed eternity. Christ is the centre of all reality. *Religion* for Bonhoeffer, was in the early stages understood by him as a means of revelation for God, but his thoughts have developed by the time of the letters in prison, to speaking of a time for *religion* and a time not for *religion*.³⁰⁵ So the *religious a priori* man of Seeberg was a transitional being conditioned by history, thus Bonhoeffer can state that religion is only a *garment of Christianity*. This clearly reflects Bonhoeffer's understanding of the church (as the means of revelation) prior to the Barmen Declaration and its demise in his eyes necessitating Barmen.

Bonhoeffer held this view then because he believed that the National Socialist era was a *non-religious age*, a time when the old garment (held within the church) was still worn, but it could no longer transmit the revelation of God in Christ. Thus, if our aim is to re-establish Christ at the centre one must speak of Christ in a non-religious, un-churched way, so that His revelation may be witnessed, understood and followed. Bonhoeffer was interested in what this would look like. He

³⁰⁴ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press. 1965. p172.

³⁰⁵ see Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. p280.

believed it would take on board historical dimensions, ie. real properties, unlike the properties of inwardness and metaphysics, which he understood as being meaningless. Thus his concept had moved from the earlier times, from being a systematic approach in a Barthian dialectical sense and had moved into the concept of *Geistesgeschichte*, a concept which inherently belongs to an individual moment of history. Thus, in his letters from prison, Christian faith is about historical salvation this side of death. What does this mean?

Bonhoeffer writes, "The religiosity of people makes them look in their distress to the power of God in the world...The Bible directs them to God's powerlessness and suffering; Only the suffering God can help." ³⁰⁶ So as Kelly states, the object of the study is not a systematic but rather an attempt, "...to discover the contemporary form of Christ, which, like *cantus firmus* or underlying, could bring all the counter points of Christian life into harmony. Jesus Christ directs people not only to the authentic God depicted in the Bible but also to that wholeness of life to which every person aspires. True freedom is to be experienced in the pursuit and attainment of such wholeness." ³⁰⁷

Now, Bonhoeffer's entire argument only holds if he has proved that the time for *religion* and therein the church as previously known, is indeed over. For within the old church

³⁰⁶ *ibid* p361.

³⁰⁷ Kelly D, *Liberating Faith*, Fontana Press. 1984. p52.

structure, for Bonhoeffer, *religion* can no longer bring the revelatory form of Christ to creation. We will deal extensively with the first question later but, firstly we will highlight the form that *religion* takes for Bonhoeffer and thus ask why it has become inappropriate for him, during his time in prison, remembering, meanwhile, his claim that *religion* (like the institutional church) is merely a garment of intellectual history which can be changed through different epochs.

Barth does not go far enough for Bonhoeffer though he recognises Barth's contribution³⁰⁸. He also criticises Barth over his, "positivism of revelation," (because, he has put) "...in place of religion...the Church... but the world in some degree (is) made to depend on itself and left to its own devices, and that's its mistake." ³⁰⁹ Thus, Bonhoeffer accuses Barth of not going far enough and, through his Christological systematic added to his historical perspective on religion, Bonhoeffer can freely examine all opportunities and consider complete renewal.

Feil writes, "Bonhoeffer identified in LPP that religion was metaphysics, inwardness and partiality. Pietism is included as the final attempt to maintain evangelical christianity as a religion." ³¹⁰ Bethge adds four more concepts to this list of

³⁰⁸ see Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986.

³⁰⁹ *ibid* p286.

³¹⁰ Feil E, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Fortress Press, 1965. p162.

attributes of religion,³¹¹ these are *deus ex machina*, *tutelage*, *privilege* and *dispensability*. Godsey states, "Whenever Bonhoeffer explains what he means by *religious*, he connects it with such terms as metaphysical, inwardness, subjective and individualistic."³¹²

A *religious* interpretation would thus be both metaphysical and individualistic. This is a system which explains Christianity in terms of abstract truths and is communicated through words, or one in which individual salvation is emphasized as the *a priori*. This system keeps people in tutelage and by holding such power over people it contains privilege. In many ways, it becomes a self justifying system of looking after ones own interests. Partiality, reveals for Bonhoeffer the historical ties to an intellectual system and institutional church.

For Bonhoeffer, the question is, what if mankind is no longer concerned either what the church is teaching through metaphysic, or individually in terms of personal salvation? What if the religious *a priori* man does not in fact exist? A premise on which for Bonhoeffer nineteen hundred years of preaching and theology had been based. The fight to preserve religion has been, "The great defection from God and from Christ."³¹³ In fighting this rearguard action the church has become in itself unchristian, ie., existing on the boundaries through inwardness, talking of soul life.

³¹¹ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Collins, 1985. p776-781.

³¹² Godsey J, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, SCM Press Ltd. 1960. p249.

³¹³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison, The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd, 1986. p250.

Godsey writes, "Bonhoeffer reminds us answers are to be found nowadays that leave God right out of the picture. It simply isn't true that Christianity alone has the answers. In fact it is Bonhoeffer's opinion that the Christian answers are no more conclusive or compelling than any of the others."³¹⁴ The Christian answers indeed cling to the private side of life for survival. (Bonhoeffer has an intense dislike for either secrecy or psychotherapy. This ties in to his thought on *deus ex machina* and the church existing on the boundaries.³¹⁵ It has also much to do with his father's influence, being in the opposing camp to Freud!)

As mentioned earlier, Bonhoeffer's thoughts on *religion*, are only relevant if the *world is coming of age* and we are indeed in a *religionless* period, because the institutional church and the religion it teaches and the language it uses, are no longer of interest and relevance to the objects of its mission, people. For Bonhoeffer, living through his experience of Nazi Germany during their time of dominance, the answer which he saw with his own eyes was that the time for *religion* (and the old church structure) is now over and we are and must move to the time of Christ. Here we now approach the field of what Bethge called the *New Formulae*, for this new age.

³¹⁴ Godsey J, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, SCM Press Ltd. 1960. p249.

³¹⁵ see Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, The Enlarged Edition, SCM Press Ltd, 1986. p326.

From the letter of the 30th June, 1944,³¹⁶ we see that Christ's *Lordship* is exercised by powerlessness, service and the cross. By such identification Christ can thus be the liberator of all humanity and thus the very centre of history. In his very important letter of 8th June 1944, Bonhoeffer having identified the boundaries of the church's influence since the Enlightenment period states, "The question is: Christ and the world that has come of age."³¹⁷ Bonhoeffer then examines the whole thought process which has been involved with the restoration of Christianity, and the various methods that have been suggested through Barth to Tillich to Bultmann. He then concludes, "Thus the world's coming of age is no longer an occasion for polemics and apologetics, but is now really better understood than it understands itself, namely on the basis of the gospel and in the light of Christ."³¹⁸ This is where Bonhoeffer wished to start his book³¹⁹, it is the new start where the gospel and Christ will be considered in the light of a mature world. Robertson says that Bonhoeffer starts here because he, "Was confident of the presence of Christ and was deeply concerned with the proclamation of the gospel."³²⁰

Bonhoeffer was living now in the secular community of Tegel Prison, acting as the prisoner's unofficial padre and it was here that he discovered Christ at the very heart of that

³¹⁶ see *ibid* p339-342.

³¹⁷ *ibid* p327.

³¹⁸ *ibid* p329.

³¹⁹ *ibid* p380.

³²⁰ Robertson E, *Bonhoeffer's Heritage*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1989. p4.

community. The phrase *maturity*, which Bonhoeffer had learnt from Wilhelm Dilthey from his reading in prison now replaced his previous term from *Ethics of autonomy*. Thus Bethge tells us that *religionless* Christianity must be understood as part of Kant's formula that, "The Enlightenment is the emergence of man from immaturity that he is himself responsible for. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's own intelligence without the guidance of another person."³²¹ Or indeed a religion taught by an institutional church. However, for Bonhoeffer, the *world coming of age* through the *maturing* process, is not seen necessarily as an advancement, it merely is a historical stage in the process of human *maturity*.

Bonhoeffer will now embrace secularisation in the name of Christ, the Lord of history, who is integrally involved in that process in a positive sense. So Bonhoeffer stops using the word *secular* in his writings from prison because it was understood in a condemnatory sense. *World Come of Age* or *maturity* as a process or indeed revelation, is led by God to bring His people to Him in and through Christ's revelation. This means that by accepting that Christ is involved in the maturation process, that Christ has a positive relationship between Himself and the modern world. We must therefore proceed to live confidently in a *non-religious* way.

Kelly describes this way of living as, "Freedom and

³²¹ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Collins, 1985. p770.

Discipline: Rhythms of Christocentric Spirituality",³²² which is a good way of putting it. The spirituality is maintained by an intense life of prayer and worship, which Bonhoeffer called the *arcane discipline* (arcane in that it is representative of the faith of the church fathers and hence can maintain the Christian mysteries from profanation). Bonhoeffer believed that out of this action a new form of church would arise through a rebirth of God's word. He wrote from prison these words, "It is not for us to prophesy the day (though the day will come), when men once more will be called so to utter the Word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming - as was Jesus' language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it will be a language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God's peace with men and the coming of the kingdom." ³²³

What then is this new language? Kelly suggests it is linked to words that follow in this passage from the *letters* where, "The Christian cause will be a silent and hidden affair." ³²⁴ Bonhoeffer here is explicitly advocating a practice of the early church, mentioned above, of the *secret* or *arcane discipline*. Where do these notions emanate from? In *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer distinguishes time between the *penultimate* and the *ultimate*. Through Christ's incarnation the *penultimate* is

³²² Kelly D, *Liberating Faith*, Fontana Press. 1984. p130.

³²³ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd 1986.p300.

³²⁴ *ibid.*

given full worth, and yet it is by Christ's resurrection, the *ultimate*, that the *penultimate* is given meaning. Even so, Bonhoeffer discovered that to talk of *ultimate* things, such as resurrection, can be inappropriate. Sometimes silence reigns within the *penultimate*.

This *non-religious* action, which involves prayer and silence must lead to a Christian life dedicated to others. It is an action of love in silence. A silent proclamation which awaits a time of public proclamation as guided by the Spirit and discerned by the community maintaining the discipline. Those who practised the *secret discipline* would maintain the Christian mysteries from *profanation* and maintain the apostolic era, even in a secular age. The *non-religious* era, by its very nature secret, in verbal terms, would thus prevent itself from becoming triumphalistic and yet would proclaim Christ's love in action.

So Bonhoeffer wrote, "Christ's remaining with us and our remaining by Christ delivers us from all stagnation in religious forms. Our bond with Christ is arcane, in that even though we may be chosen and favoured, we don't make this a matter of privilege or of a religiously separate existence. It is part of that arcanum that I hold to preaching, baptism and the eucharist, that I worship, confess and give praise within the community." ³²⁵

³²⁵ Kelly D, *Liberating Faith*, Fontana Press. 1984. p136.

When it is impossible to relate dogma to the new age, one must stay silent until a day comes when an answer can be given. One awaits the Spirit's creative ability and the community's discernment therein, that we might find answers to proclamation in the future. This church will thus be small, rigorous and deeply committed to Christ. They will be committed to the other, which will thus build a better world, with the ethic of love at it's centre. False conceptions of God in the *world come of age* must be denied by silence, even to the point of living as if there were no God.

Bonhoeffer tells us, "We cannot be honest unless we recognise that we have to live in a world *etsi deus non daretur*. And this is just what we do recognise - before God. God himself compels us to recognise it. So our coming of age leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God. God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15.34). The God who lets us live in the world without a working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of this world and onto the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matt 8.17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his own omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and his suffering. Here is the decisive difference between Christianity and all other religions. Man's

religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; God is deus ex machina. The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help. To that extent we must say that the development towards the world's coming of age outlined above, which has done away with a false conception of God, opens up a way of seeing the God of the Bible, who wins power and space in the world by his weakness. This will probably be the starting point for our secular interpretation." ³²⁶

Thus the advance to a new interpretation takes place in a world come of age, where religion, that is, metaphysic, inwardness, individualism, tutelage, privilege and partiality, no longer exist or indeed are accepted. A new structure of community springs up from such a landscape, where the community is established around the secret discipline of prayer and worship, she gathers to re-interpret God's word to us for the new age, fully expecting Christ to be involved in the matter, in the current history. This community will live as people in Christ's world and share in his sufferings with his people. Bonhoeffer explains it as thus, "He (the secular man) must therefore really live in the godless world, without attempting to gloss over or explain its ungodliness in some religious way or other. He must live a secular life (as one who has been freed from all religious obligations and inhibitions). To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a

³²⁶ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd 1986, p360.

penitent, or a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to be a man - not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but the participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life. That is metanoia; not in the first place thinking about one's own needs, problems, sins and fears, but allowing oneself to be caught up into the way of Jesus Christ...There is nothing of religious method here. The religious act is always something partial; faith is something whole involving the whole of one's life. Jesus calls men, not to be a new religion, but to life." ³²⁷

Bonhoeffer, by stating that *religious* method can only be partial, is revealing that he has not significantly moved from his opinion at the time of writing *Act and Being*. He closes this letter to Bethge stating that this new form of *non-religious* language and action, must not conceal the godlessness of this world, indeed such godlessness should be more revealed, due to the new beam of light that will shine upon it. This godlessness Studdert Kennedy call sin.

Following the letter of 18th July, 1944, Bonhoeffer was to discover the failure of the bomb plot to kill Hitler. Two days later, a letter written on 21st July, still reiterated to Bethge, if perhaps in more personal terms, the necessity for the Christian to live in the world as simply a man of faith. This man of faith would necessarily share with Christ in the

³²⁷ *ibid* p361.

sufferings of the world, indeed abandoning oneself to Him completely. The sense of the situational theology for Bonhoeffer, which followed him throughout his life, is especially apparent here.

Bonhoeffer writes, "That is how one becomes a man and a Christian.." ³²⁸ Realising all may not work out so positively for him, Bonhoeffer set to work on his book, the outline of which we are only left with. The first two chapters, *A Stocktaking of Christianity* and *The Real Meaning of the Christian Faith*. ³²⁹ However, the last chapter looks in even more depth at the meaning of religionless Christianity, for it suggests a more concrete nature to the new church than we have as yet examined. This is the new form of church for a new era, in a *world come of age*. Bonhoeffer states "...that this will only truly be the church when it exists for others." ³³⁰ She should give away all her property to those in need and the clergy should live on the freewill offerings only of the congregations and the minister could take on a secular vocation. Here the earlier desire following the Barmen Declaration to form a free church with no form of privilege comes through again. State compromise of the church would then no longer be a threat. Indeed, Bonhoeffer's revolution of a *non-religious* kind in a *world come of age*, is quite simply a return to the days of the early church as represented in the Book of Acts. The church would exist as community, not

³²⁸ *ibid* p370.

³²⁹ *ibid* p380-381.

³³⁰ *ibid* p382.

institution, and exist for others, whilst maintaining the Sacraments within its disciplines. Bonhoeffer is calling the church to reformation and the Gospel will be re-presented to the *world come of age*, as discerned by the community of believers guided by the Spirit.

The church must thus serve the community, not dominate. She must, "Tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others...it will have to speak of moderation, purity, trust, loyalty, constancy, patience, discipline, humility, contentment and modesty. It must not underestimate the importance of human example (which has its origins in the humanity of Jesus and is so important in Paul's teaching); it is not abstract argument but example that gives its word emphasis and power." ³³¹

Here Bonhoeffer's thought, which was at the time of writing at an early stage, is exposed as somewhat erratic. He both calls for silence and then at another point mentions proclamation. Considering his personal situation and the nature of these writings it is not surprising that we find irregularities, however the point most strongly being made by Bonhoeffer is that first the church must get itself right with God before it tries to proclaim to the world. It must learn or indeed create a *non-religious* language (moderation, purity, trust etc..) in the *world come of age*, first through its reformation structurally and held within the *arcane discipline*. He closes

³³¹ *ibid* p383.

by suggesting perhaps there should be a revision of the creeds, apologetics and a reform of training for the ministry and clerical life as being future prospects for him, he hopes this work will be, as mentioned before, "Some help to the church's future." ³³²

IV. CONCLUSION

We have travelled a long way from our initial question which asked what Bonhoeffer's *Non-Religious Interpretation* would mean. We, of course, cannot be certain about our answer for the work was unfinished, however we can think out loud what it might have been. The term *religion* in Bonhoeffer's understanding was one which followed Karl Barth's notion; in other words, *religion* by the end of the argument could be split into true and false categories, dependent upon faithful action in response to God's Word. This is why Bonhoeffer can still maintain *religious* activity within the *arcane discipline* to protect the *mysteries* from profanation. He did not arrive at this point immediately, but it would be a mistake to assume that religion was finally a completely redundant category for him. Indeed, the *non-religious* language becomes simply the new form of Christian religious language (in example and word), used by the new Christian communities reformed as previously mentioned to proclaim or re-present the Christian Gospel for the world come of age (or secular/mature man).

³³² *ibid.*

So the form of *religion* would change (be reformed), he claimed. This is clear in his *Outline for a Book*, where he calls the church and the clergy to give up her power hold over mankind, which keeps her on the boundaries, and to become like Christ, in the centre, by living as human beings, and sharing unprotected, in life to the full. Thus the figure of the human suffering Christ can help through the shared sufferings of His people. He is arguing, through his time spent with the Confessing Church, for a truly free church. Perhaps his ecumenical activity would have allowed this church to have been, what they originally had hoped for, the Church of Christ. Pastors would be kept, like the Confessing Church, by their local congregations, and they would perhaps be required to also supplement their stipends by taking on a secular job also. This would fully involve them in the human side of working life, to which all their congregations were a part.

Bonhoeffer's theology, can only understand God, in and through Christ; this necessarily causes his thought to be driven *from below*. His personal involvement through family and friends (Jewish) highlighted a theology where only the *suffering God can help*. The Church of Christ would thus fully share in the life of the world. Christianity would return to what Dumas called *primitive Christianity* and would be founded on Bonhoeffer's exegetical method of *re-interpretation* or *re-presentation*, where the Bible would be understood as a direct word from God to us, and God would speak to the new church in and through word, prayer and the Sacraments. The church will

not *lord* it over humanity; rather it will be humanity, where the *arcane discipline* will maintain such humanity, in its wholeness, body, mind and spirit, through the discipline. It will be the church *for others*, thus taking seriously the teachings found in the Bible.

There will not be a return to pietism, which is a knee-jerk reaction to a falling empire, but rather the church will accept change, as part of Christ's *Lordship of time*. She will remain silent unless sure of answers. She will speak out for the oppressed in Christ's name, if not, she cannot be the church. The church's realm is the world, not specific denominations, for Christ came to give life in its fullness to all, and here she must learn to speak a *non-religious* language, a language of *costly grace*.

Bonhoeffer had not worked out what this language would be. Indeed, this would have been an impossibility within his methodology, since the language would come from the newly reformed church communities guided by the Spirit for the new times. But we know that it would not be a language which talked, simply to dominate and threaten, which picked on the weak psychologically and took advantage of their predicament by offering easy solutions. Nor would it speak a language which offered grace with no discipleship, spirituality, with no works. It would speak a language of love, a language which portrayed Christ's love to this world, an honest language, which by revealing Christ would so enable God to be

understood. The new church would remember that Christ was also a Jew and born of man. The language when found would be brought to us through much prayer.

Bonhoeffer's picture is thus not extraordinary to us in our post modern situation. Mankind has matured, not improved necessarily, and can no longer accept in honesty certain forms of *religious* language without enquiry. In many ways, Bonhoeffer is telling us that we must learn to re-read our Bibles, or re-interpret them to use his language, in a manner which is both meaningful to the fundamentals of the faith and to current intellectual challenges. It means that the Bible cannot be split, but rather, must be accepted as *the thing itself*, a piece of God inspired history, which reveals his will for us through a fully human piece of historic literature. This is because it is based in humanity, in its fullest sense, and so it can thus only be understood when read within humanity (by the faith community). It must be read as a story in which God is speaking to us directly.

The Bible can only be properly understood when we participate in its continuing story through *our discipleship*. Thus it is like the Greek audience before Oedipus Rex, who get caught up in the moment because *all* have suffered. And yet it is greater, for it is not simply a tragic work, there is also great heroism, joy and happiness revealed in this history, which as such, catches all of life in one life (unlike the Oedipus story), and as we read it, we find redemption through

a loving God who reveals himself to us daily through prayer and others.

Finally, we must remember that Bonhoeffer's ideas are a product of his life's experiences, just like the chaplains of the Great War and MacLeod. He was, as we said earlier, a man of his time. Bonhoeffer discovered this through his involvement with the *Jewish problem*. His theology and the churches theology, neither had the language nor the purpose to fully deal with Hitler's actions and speak honestly to her people. New wine needed to be served and yet the old wine was all that was available. The churches government likewise could not deal with such an assault, and so Bonhoeffer in his outline looks at not only a new language, or doctrine, but also a new form of ministry. Bonhoeffer called for reformation from Tegel prison based on the practice of the early church as related in the New Testament. Through reform would a new language be found and proclaimed to the *world come of age*. Bonhoeffer then like Kennedy, Clayton and MacLeod was a prophet and reformer of the church for his people. Like them he advocated a new ecumenical church, spiritually maintained through sacrament and prayer, acting as a servant church to those most in need. Freed from the religious structures of the past, Bonhoeffer's new religionless Christians would get on with serving Christ and not an institution, in a world which he claimed had *come of age*.

Chapter Four: Naval Chaplaincy

I. BACKGROUND

Dr. Johnson wrote, "When men come to like a sea-life, they are not fit to live on land." ³³²

As mentioned in chapter one, I have served within the Naval Chaplaincy Service over the past ten years and operationally five times. It was following these experiences that I came to understand the significance and relevance to my own situation of the thought of men such as Studdert Kennedy, Tubby Clayton, George MacLeod and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. As noted in chapter one, the last ten years within naval chaplaincy have been ones of great change and there has been much debate within the branch as to whether these changes have been for better or for worse. It was with these changes in mind, and my belief that the chaplaincy service required further reformation, that I set sail on this work. For surely our changes should be advised by such prophets of the church and chaplaincy as mentioned above?

We have now looked closely at chaplaincy during the Great War and subsequently some ministries that would develop out of it. We have studied also, and note the similarities, with the situation facing Dietrich Bonhoeffer during the Second World War of the last century. The writings of the Great War

³³²Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p21.

Padres' and Bonhoeffer have been located in and made relevant to our current context, through chapter one and my thoughts and findings from the HMS OCEAN study and Grace Davies' work. A common theme has emerged that people no longer think denominationally, but rather, a religionless Christianity has emerged. This Christianity highlights the need and desire of ordinary people to hear the message of Jesus of Nazareth and not necessarily be directed to the needs and demands of the separate branches of the church (which they no longer believe in anyway). To bring this message to the people we have noted that military chaplaincy allows close contact to be made between minister and people (for Bonhoeffer it was Tegel Prison). It is the sharedness of the situation, warts and all, which gives the people the ears to listen. The Chaplain must suffer in the same way as his people do, as we have noted, an important aspect for commando chaplaincy success as it is formed out of the shared experience of commando training with the men. As Bonhoeffer said the time for *privilege* and *lording it over people* is over. The *man come of age (in the trenches or in Govan)* in the *secular world* can no longer be fooled. The same is true as we found in chapter one with the post modern individual.

We have noted that by being there, the Chaplain becomes a real member of the community and thus speaks as one of them. He thus learns the language and can transmit the gospel in a *non religious* way. For Bonhoeffer, the *non religious interpretation* is based out of being in community with those

whom one would bring the message of Jesus of Nazareth. For Studdert Kennedy this allowed him to write his poetry, which encapsulated the message of Jesus, in an understandable way and thus it was read, by many ordinary folk, because it was relevant to them.

In community with the people, the Christian minister is maintained through team support, where mutual respect exists beyond previous denominational belongings. Here we note the importance for the Confessing Church, when under direct attack by the authorities, of the communities at Finkenwalde and Zingst. Thus can religionless Christian communities exist beyond the bounds of the institutional church. This is especially important in places where it has failed to bring its message to its people to any great extent. This was MacLeod's greatest motivating factor when considering the Iona Communities' work in the new church extension charges in Scotland.

In our final chapter we will use these ideas to look at the future of the institutional church in a civilian setting, with the above thoughts to advise us. For the moment however, we will put in some background detail, to help better inform the findings in our last chapter, on the specific future of naval chaplaincy, the original aim of this work. It is to this background on naval chaplaincy which we will now turn.

I.1 A Short History of Naval Chaplaincy

Clergy have gone to sea as chaplains, since 651 AD. In the pamphlet *Chaplain*, which is produced by the Royal Navy to describe the role to prospective candidates the following description is given: "The Navy's raison d'etre is to function at sea. Naval Chaplaincy exists to provide spiritual, moral and social well being to Naval Service Personnel and their dependants within the context of a 'fighting force', a philosophy which is enshrined in the First Article of War." ³³³

This Article says the following, "Articles of War for the Government of Her Majesty's Ships, Vessels, Forces by Sea and Naval Establishments, according to the Act 5 & 6 Elizabeth 2, CH.53, Sections 1 to 25 inclusive, 27 to 43B inclusive, 45 and 48 to 52 inclusive.

Articles of War.

Public Worship.

1. All Officers in command of Her Majesty's ships shall cause public worship of Almighty God to be solemnly, orderly and reverently performed in their respective ships, and shall take care that prayers and preaching, by the chaplains of those said ships, be performed diligently and that the Lord's Day be observed." ³³⁴

These are indeed strong words enshrined in the most notable doctrinal document within the Royal Navy (all things naval

³³³ *Chaplain*, DGNCS Library, Victory Building, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. 7 February 1997.

³³⁴ *Form S.282*, DGNCS Library, Victory Building, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. Revised 3/92.

largely rest upon the *Articles of War*). But how has it been in reality since the days of Utta in 651 AD? Has the Royal Navy truly sought out the ministrations of chaplains or has it really been more of a form of tribal supernaturalism sustained by individuals who often face the dangers of the seas over which they have little control? Bonhoeffer would follow Karl Barth here and thus describe such a ministry as *religious*. To discover what chaplaincy is and has been, we will follow a short history of Naval Chaplaincy and then look at a current study on board the Royal Navy's newest and largest ship, HMS OCEAN. As previously mentioned, a former parish of mine.

WF Scott, a Naval Chaplain from 1913-31 writes of the ancient history and times of early chaplaincy with the following conclusions: "The Boatswain, the Gunner and the Chaplain alone retain the titles they have held from the beginning, and of these it may be justly claimed, that of Chaplain is not the least ancient." ³³⁶ Gordon Taylor, however, accords the Boatswain with the most ancient of ranks, and then goes on to point out that the first chaplains to serve in the fleet were in fact civilian priests often already holding an office as Chaplain to a noble. An example of this can be seen in 1147, when at the time of the Second Crusade, Duodechin, a priest within the fleet of Richard I, wrote these words following the battle for Lisbon. "That every ship should have its own priest, and that there should be orders to observe the same

³³⁶ Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p8.

practices as in a parish...That everyone should confess weekly and go to Communion on the Lord's Day." ³³⁷

It is more than likely that some of these so-called priests would have been Bishops. But the point to note above all is that there were 164 ships in Richard's Fleet, so there must have been an extremely large gathering of clergy to support it.

The Third Crusade in 1190 involved even larger numbers with the Fleet standing off the Holy Land amounting to 230 ships by 1191. Taylor writes, "During this Crusade Richard issued certain ordinances which may be regarded as an early forerunner of the Articles of War which have long governed the Royal Navy." ³³⁸ The Royal Navy, because of its continued use in the periods of the Crusades, was forming into more than a collection of interdependent units, gradually finding a corporate image as a whole under Richard.

What of the chaplains then, what did they do during such periods other than fulfil their holy orders? The first thing to note is that there was little differentiation then between secular and ecclesiastical tasks. On combatant action, chaplains did indeed work under slightly different rules of engagement, but these hardly reflect the current form under the Geneva Convention. Taylor writes, "The churchmen of those

³³⁷ *ibid* p3.

³³⁸ *ibid* p5.

days were much employed in civil affairs, and in general did not shrink from taking an active part in the defence of their kingdom. The fleet which gathered in 992 was under the command of the Bishop of London, Aelfstan, the Bishop of Dorchester, Aesewig, and two lay nobles, and it had some success even though one of the lay 'admirals' deserted it. In days when dignitaries brought their due contribution of men to the armies they also hazarded their lives in battle and said masses for the combatants. They did not see their function solely as spiritual, and Archbishop Aelfric (d. 1005) had to remind them that it was unlawful to wear arms or go into battle. Yet when he died he left his best ship, with helms and coats of mail for sixty men, to the King. The clergy who saw themselves as combatants wielded not the sword but the mace, the weapon of militant churchmen, who sought to avoid the denunciation against 'those who smite with the sword'; they argued that although the Scripture forbade the shedding of blood, there was no restriction on the dashing out of brains. A handy alternative, the military flail, was nicknamed 'the holy-water sprinkler', for obvious reasons, since it 'consisted of a shaft with a chain depending, at the end of which was a ball of iron covered with spikes'. In the Bayeux Tapestry, Archbishop Odo of Bayeux is shown wielding a *baculum*, or mace, at the Battle of Hastings." ³³⁹

Things did however move on in respect of battling clergy and the jobs which they fulfilled. By the time of King John,

³³⁹ *ibid* p2.

William de Wrotham, Archdeacon of Taunton, was employed as the first ever *Keeper of the King's Ships*. This office which would duly become the appointment called 'Clerk to the Navy' and would finally be known as, the 'Secretaryship of the Admiralty', was started and always staffed by chaplains. Chaplaincy then in these ancient days fulfilled both an ecclesiastical and secular role, as we would describe it today.

The Navy in the middle ages was a different body to the one we would know today. There was little to distinguish the Royal and Merchant Fleets; indeed, Sir Francis Drake, when Vice-Admiral of the Navy in 1588 had commanded in his time five times more merchant ships than Royal ones. Indeed, despite being a Vice-Admiral, today he would be described as a reservist! Most of the ships of the Navy at this time were private, and hired by the crown on the necessary occasions. For the most part, chaplains arrived when asked by sponsoring Captains to travel on board for the length of time of a voyage, minister the sacraments as required, and then disembark and return to their parish on completion. In other words, they indeed were civilian clergy.

These chaplains were responsible for much of the early spread of Christianity to the new world and Rodger describes the situation as thus, "Numerous seamen's churches and chapels - several of them built or beautified from the profits of piracy - testify to the seafarers' faith, and there is one reference

to an English squadron going to sea with a chaplain. This does not contradict the evidence of an English confessor's manual which describes the seaman as subject to every kind of vice, with a 'wife' in every port." ³⁴⁰

A good example of a Chaplain in such times is Francis Fletcher who in 1577 was circumnavigating the world with Drake.

Fletcher was a man of the sea with previous experience and he stood watches during the voyage. He was also a diarist for the journey, a task for which chaplains would later become much noted. Fletcher is particularly recorded for his honesty when writing the ship's diary, something which did not always please his Captain!

Rodger writes, "In Queen Elizabeth's time both her ships and privateers often took chaplains. Thirteen served in 1588, and there were nine on the 1596 Cadiz expedition, all in the retinue of Howard, Essex or other great men. One of them preached an Anglican liturgy in Cadiz cathedral on Sunday 27 June. The position of a chaplain in a privateer, especially before the outbreak of openwar in 1585, could be awkward. Shakespeare's 'sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped one out of the table' was not an invention. John Oxenham for one did precisely that, and the chaplains of Fenton's expedition made themselves very unpopular by preaching that armed robbery might not always be

³⁴⁰ Rodger NAM, *The Safeguard of the Sea; A Naval History of Britain, Volume One 660-1649*, Harper/Collins Publishers. 1997. p142.

warranted by scripture." ³⁴¹ It has to be noted here that most chaplains of this time did not criticise plunder, especially that of Spanish goods, since they believed that this was God's work.

The duties of the chaplains at sea during these times was to preach at sea and celebrate communion ashore. Prayers would be said once or twice a day at sea, but in Drake's ship he would say these prayers himself. By 1626 chaplaincy was beginning to take on a more recognised form. Under Charles 1, we see the first acknowledgement of the need to have a Chaplain on most ships at sea. We also note for the first time the arrival of the naval dockyard chaplains; serving at Chatham and Portsmouth.

What then were the chaplains conditions of service? Firstly, they were only paid as Able Seamen. Perhaps this is even an exaggeration, for it is recorded that sometimes they were paid very late, or not at all! They also only served in the Navy the length of the commission of the ship. But when working, the Chaplain would be expected to fulfil daily prayers and minister to the sick. In the dockyards they were expected to preach, expound scripture and catechise youth.

It was at the onset of the English Civil War that the Navy became the Royal Navy, for following the death of Charles 1 at

³⁴¹ *ibid* p306.

the scaffold, approximately one third of the Navy remained in Royalist hands under the control of Prince Rupert of Bohemia. However, it was not until 1654 that chaplains started to become officially appointed to the Navy by the Commissioners of the Fleet and in 1656 a form of selection process began. These changes came about due to the proliferation of the building of warships from both sides during the civil war.

During the Dutch and Spanish Wars in the 1650's there was a considerable number of chaplains present at sea. Many were noted for their bravery during the battles as they administered to the dead and dying. At this time Samuel Pepys was the *Clerk of the Acts* (Senior Administrator) for the Navy. He showed an especial interest in the cause of chaplains and through pressure in Parliament by 15 December 1677, chaplains were given a warrant to serve. Taylor states, "The appointment of chaplains by Warrant signed by the King himself was an exceptional honour accorded only to them." ³⁴²

What then was it like to serve as a Naval Chaplain during the seventeenth century? Perhaps the best known and most celebrated Chaplain was Henry Teonge. Our records of his lifestyle come out of his diarist duties. In 1675, Teonge served in his second ship at sea, the frigate, *Assistance*. During the first Sunday at sea there was no religious observance due to the business of the ship and the second

³⁴² Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains; A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p95.

Sunday managed worship but it was very stormy and the congregation were thrown about a lot. The diary speaks of a lifestyle of excessive drinking, shots fired in salute, the nature of brutal naval punishments, the observance of Christmas Day and the appalling sanitary conditions. In 1675, Teonge buried twenty men, including the Captain. This was a common occurrence for those who served a life at sea.

It is worth noting that observance of Holy Communion at sea was rare in these days. Indeed, it is a late invention. This is due to two factors. Firstly, the worry that came from earlier, Catholic days of the spillage of the wine and bread at sea and secondly in latter times of communion itself being seen to be a Catholic ordinance. It is worth recording here before we leave the seventeenth century behind, that following King William and Queen Anne's enthronement, and as tribute to the support which the Royal Navy offered them, they awarded their palace at Greenwich to the service in 1694. It was here that King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I had been born. The palace was rebuilt as a Naval hospital and by 1815 she looked after 2,710 seamen. In 1999, the government closed down Greenwich College as a Naval establishment.

Following William's ascension there was a form of religious revival in the nation. New Naval churches were built in Sheerness, Portsmouth and Plymouth. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was formed in 1699 and its literature was broadly dispersed amongst the Fleet, at the Navy's request!

SPCK would remain strong supporters of chaplaincy down through the centuries. In 1702, the Chaplain of the *Salisbury*, wrote to SPCK about the evangelisation of the Navy. He said, "As to the reformation of the seamen, I recommend the gift of a little tobacco to be joined to good advice and instruction; which being done with a due air of concern will have a wonderful effect. I request that the Society will send a considerable quantity of coarse tobacco to be disposed of by each chaplain of a ship." ³⁴³ *Woodbine Willie*, eat your heart out!

The general religious observance of the seamen however was not as perhaps *SPCK* would have wanted, or indeed have us believe. The Chaplain of the *Barfleur*, Thomas Shewell, wrote complaining that "...the service of God was wholly laid aside in some ships by connivance of the seamen, that a captain had commanded him in the middle of his sermon to 'Leave off, in the King's name' and stating that, in reply, he had desired him in God's name, to sit down and hear him." ³⁴⁴ Shewell went through some torrid times and described the Navy as a place where there was a "...torrent of vice and atheism." ³⁴⁵

To help strengthen the position of chaplains and to ensure their discipline, in 1701, William Hodges was appointed the first *Overseer and Inspector of chaplains*. This title would travel down through the centuries to become known today as the

³⁴³ *ibid* p119.

³⁴⁴ *ibid* p120.

³⁴⁵ *ibid*.

Director General Naval Chaplaincy Service and the *Chaplain of the Fleet*. A noted difference however is that in the eighteenth century the title was a sea-going billet unlike today. The sharing of the difficulties of life at sea was very much part of the job; indeed between 1690-1700 twenty five chaplains sadly lost their lives.

By the mid eighteenth century conditions on the whole were not much better. A young officer, Edward Thompson wrote to a young relative, offering advice on whether he should join the Navy. He wrote, "Low company is the bane of all young men; but in a man-of-war you have the collected filth of jails. Condemned criminals have the alternative of hanging, or entering on board. There's not a vice committed on shore but is practised here. The scenes of horror and infamy on board of a man-of-war are so many and so great that I think they must rather disgust a mind than allure to it. I do not mean, by this advice, to have you appear a dull inactive being, that shudders amidst these horrors. No; I would wish you to see them in their own proper shapes, for, to be hated, they need to be seen...You will find some little outward appearance of religion - and Sunday prayers! - but the congregation is generally drawn by the boatswain (like sheep by the shepherd), who neither spares oaths nor blows." ³⁴⁶ To be fair to the Navy, the war with the French was raging and they were in desperate need of men, so the press gangs were busy. An example of this was the fact that the Admiralty needed fifty

³⁴⁶ *ibid* p162.

companies of Marines to be raised virtually overnight.

1759 brought what was known as the *annus mirabilis*, the year of victories. With it we are brought into a world of battle, fear and death, of which the sea-chaplains were very much a part. The *Prince George* was burnt at sea at this time and the Chaplain, Thomas Sharp, described the scene as such,

"Fire first broke out in the Boatswain's store-room, to which place large quantities of water were applied, but in vain....Captain Peyton ordered scuttles to be made that the water might be poured in by that means; but there he was defeated likewise, for only two carpenters could be found....The lower gun-deck ports were then opened, but the water that flowed in was not sufficient to stop the violence of the flames. He ordered, likewise, the powder-room to be wetted, lest the ship should immediately be blown up, and every soul perish in an instant....

I mention the above particulars, as I was below myself, worked with the men as long as I could stand it, went up for air, and returned again instantly, consequently an eye witness, I can declare them as facts. The fire soon increased and raged violently aft on the star-board side; and, as the destruction of the ship was now found inevitable, the preservation of the Admiral (Broderick) was first consulted. Captain Peyton came on the quarter-deck and ordered the barge to be manned,

into which the Admiral entered, with near forty more,
for now there was no distinction, every man's life was
equally precious....I must be deficient even to attempt
a description of the melancholy scene before me;
shrieking cries, lamentations, bemoanings, raving
despair, and even madness itself presented themselves.
It was now high time to think of taking care of myself;
I looked from every part of the ship for my
preservation, and soon saw three boats off the stern.
I went immediately to my cabin, and offered prayers up
to God, particularly thanking him for giving me such
resolution and composure of mind. I then jumped into
the sea from one of the gun-room ports, and swam to a
boat, which put me safe on *Alderney*....more might have
been saved, had the merchantmen behaved like human
creatures; but they kept a long way to windward the
whole time, and, if possible, to their greater shame be
it spoken, instead of saving the men that swam to their
boats, they were employed in taking up geese, fowls,
tables, chairs, and whatever else of the kind came near
them." ³⁴⁷

Life was indeed a frightening one; but it was and still is one
shared by the chaplains. To this day, all chaplains at sea
attend the fire-fighting school and damage (flood) repair
unit. It is a hard but necessary course.

³⁴⁷ *ibid* p168.

Chaplaincy moved forward during the eighteenth century, although financially the chaplains remained poorly paid. Many were young and recently ordained men, which seemed to suit the Navy because they could be moulded and had less preconceived notions of ministry. The job was also an arduous one, and so the lifestyle suited the younger man. There was, however, still no central authority controlling the supervision of these appointments, which at times made things difficult for both the chaplains and command.

The last decade of the eighteenth century brought with it Britain's greatest victories at sea within sailing ships. The victories against the Dutch and French fleets were notably, the Glorious First of June, Cape St. Vincent, Camperdown, the Nile, Copenhagen and of course Trafalgar. It is of interest to note that the Royal Navy's greatest commanders, namely Drake and Nelson were both sons of parsons, with Nelson's brother also being a Chaplain in the Navy for a short while. Many chaplains served in the fleet during these battles and conducted themselves with great distinction. Most notable among the chaplains was Nelson's own man, Alexander John Scott. He served Nelson so well that his Captain would bring him with him from post to post. Like many chaplains who have succeeded in the Naval environment, Scott brought with him talents beyond ministry. A very strong linguist, he was often used as an interpreter, and served in a diplomatic capacity on foreign visits. He was also appointed as a private secretary. Indeed, following the Battle of

Copenhagen, Nelson needed a linguist to draft the *Convention of Copenhagen's Articles* and it was Scott who drew them up. So, as well as officiating at executions, preaching on a Sunday and leading daily prayers, the Chaplain might also take upon himself, if he was blessed with the appropriate skills, many additional tasks.

On 21 October, 1803, the Battle of Trafalgar was fought with the French. Scott was the Chaplain of *Victory* and his duties on that day confined him entirely to the cockpit. Soon the compartment was full of wounded and dying men. The scenes were awful, made all the worse when Nelson himself was brought down wounded. The Chaplain tended his Admiral with prayers and lemonade, then held him as he died. At the Navy's most famous battle, there were twenty seven ships of which thirteen carried chaplains.

These battles fought at the end and beginning of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought a new momentum to chaplaincy. The chaplains had earned their stripes and proved their worth. On 25 January, 1806, for the first time *Articles and Instructions* appeared with regard to chaplaincy. These are the first examples of a chaplain's *Terms of Reference*, regularising their working practices.

"Article I.

A CLERGYMAN, appointed Chaplain of one of His Majesty's Ships, must remember that it is his indispensable duty,

that the morality of his conduct and the decency, sobriety, and regularity of his manners be such as become the sacred Office to which he is appointed, and such as may inspire the Ship's company with reverence for it, and respect to himself.

II.

He is to instruct in the principles of the Christian Religion not only all such young gentlemen, as the Captain shall put under his care, but all the boys in the ship; he is to hear them read, and to explain to them, the Scriptures and the Church Catechism; and he is to be always ready to give such assistance and instruction on religious subjects, as may be required of him by any Officer or other person in the Ship.

III.

He is to be attentive to perform, with due solemnity, the duties of the Lord's Day, that the Ship's company may be impressed with devotion: and he is carefully to adapt his discourses to the capacity of his hearers and the nature of their situation, that his instructions may be intelligible and beneficial to all who hear them.

IV.

He is to apply to the Captain to appoint an intelligent well disposed person to instruct, under his directions, the boys of the Ship in the Catechism and in reading; he is very frequently to superintend the conduct of the person so appointed; to see that he is attentive to his

duty and diligent in teaching the boys, whom he is frequently to examine himself, that he may be judge of the progress they make; and he is to report to the Captain all those whom he shall find idle, or irregular in their conduct, that they may be punished; and all those whom he shall find diligent and well disposed, that they may be rewarded as they deserve.

V.

He is to be very assiduous in his attendance on any of the sick who may request it; and if any men shall be dangerously ill, he is, although they may not request it, to go to them to prepare them for death; and to comfort and admonish them, as the state of their minds or other circumstances may require.

VI.

Before he shall be allowed to receive his pay, he will be required to send to the Commissioners of the Navy a certificate signed by the Captain, that he had not been absent from the Ship more than twenty-four hours, at one time, without leave from the Admiralty or the Commander in Chief; and a certificate signed by the Captain, the senior Lieutenant, and the Master, that he had diligently attended to all the duties of his station; that he had performed divine service whenever he was directed, and that his conduct had been sober, regular, and decent, and in every respect becoming the character of a Clergyman. And when he leaves the Ship, he is to send such a certificate so signed to the

Secretary of the Admiralty, without which he shall not be again appointed to any of His Majesty's Ships." ³⁴⁸

Whilst these regulations were certainly an advance upon past procedure, what is most notably missing is a redefinition of pay procedure. Chaplains were still paid as Able-Seamen, although what the new regulations allowed was that the Chaplain could now become the schoolmaster for the ship enabling him an increased pay reward for this duty of £20 per annum. Thus do we move from the time of the Chaplain-Clerk to the time of the Chaplain-Schoolmaster, which would last for another century.

In 1808, the masters, pursers, and surgeons achieved Wardroom status. Deliverance came for chaplains in 1812 when an Order in Council produced the *chaplains Charter*. In it the annual salary was stated as £150 with a pension to follow after eight years service. An allowance was made payable for a servant and a cabin was allotted in either the Wardroom or the Senior Gunroom.

On 4 March 1812, Archdeacon John Owen was appointed *Chaplain General of the Fleet*. His appointment was a strange one in that he was also Chaplain General of the Army! The Chaplain General would now choose which chaplains were appointed to the necessary ships, thus replacing the old concept of Captain's

³⁴⁸ *ibid* p230.

patronage. Owen's appointment was not surprisingly very unpopular with the Naval chaplains. He was seen as an outsider with no sea experience who had taken the senior position away from many chaplains who had served in the Navy for many years. Due to pressure, in 1815 the title was dropped and not re-instated until 1827.

The life of a Naval Chaplain was not for everyone. In 1812, a young Chaplain of a more academic nature served for but a few intimidating months. Edward Mangin joined *HMS Gloucester* and kept a diary of his time on board. It makes interesting reading if only as evidence of how an outsider may view life within the community of the Navy and service therein as a Chaplain. He writes of his arrival at his ship, "The magnitude of the vessel, the multitude of fierce and sunburnt faces looking out of the ports, and the hum of voices from within almost disconcerted me." ³⁴⁹ On board he discovered a boisterous lot whom he felt it would be very difficult to make an impression upon, "To leave the men unproved and vicious, was possible; and I dare say it was equally possible to have transformed them all into Methodists, or madmen and hypocrites of some other kind; but to convert a man-o-war's crew into Christians would be a task which the courage of Loyola, the philanthropy of Howard, and the eloquence of St Paul united, would prove inadequate." ³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ *ibid* p241.

³⁵⁰ *ibid*.

To save further turmoil young Mangin resigned, for chaplaincy did not suit him and he left the service with these thoughts about life at sea: "...the necessity of dwelling in a prison within whose narrow limits were to be found Constraint, Disease, Ignorance, Insensibility, Tyranny, Sameness, Dirt and Foul Air; and in addition to the dangers of the Ocean, Fire, Mutiny, Pestilence, Battle and Exile." ³⁵¹ As Dr. Johnson said "...when men come to like a sea-life, they are not fit to live on land." ³⁵²

Following the Napoleonic Wars, Naval life began to steady for the greater part of the nineteenth century. It was a time of being a safeguard to those passing lawfully upon the seas, with special attention being paid, of course, to Britain's trade routes and preservation of her colonies. At this time a Chaplain called William Tucker kept a record of his time which was published by his wife following his death in 1886. Tucker was born in 1812 and studied at Peterhouse, Cambridge, before entering the Navy in 1836. His first ship was the 74-gun *Minden* and contained six hundred parishioners.

Tucker was a fairly straight laced individual, with a distinct disliking of foul language. Although sailors may themselves choose to use such language, they do not on the whole like their Chaplain to copy them. And so it was with Tucker. He became well known as the friend and advisor of all on board.

³⁵¹ *ibid* p242

³⁵² *ibid*.

In the Navy of Tucker's era there were one hundred and eighty ships world wide, of which just thirty three carried chaplains! Tucker described the chaplain's tasks as being sometimes difficult to fulfil. Holy Communion was not at this time commonly celebrated at sea, a tradition which was inherited. Indeed, finding a place on board for daily prayers could be difficult, as could be gaining access to the sick. Often permission for access fell on the want of the surgeon, who could say yes or no to a visit to his patient from the Chaplain.

Tucker described the system under which he served God as being "...fatal to the growth of the life of God in the individual soul." ³⁵³ He also noted that the Chaplain was always under scrutiny as to his personal actions, he said "Exposure of the chaplain's whole private life and conversation day by day to the constant scrutiny of his congregation was a severe test." ³⁵⁴ Indeed, on board there is nowhere to hide, and being comfortable with who you are remains an important aspect of being a Chaplain. You cannot live a lie at sea and your words must match your actions. It is far better to be understood as a fallible human being from the outset, who requires forgiveness like everyone else, than to pretend to be some kind of iconic figure. The boys will see through you, and when they do they will not trust you again and your entire ministry can crumble.

³⁵³ *ibid* p264.

³⁵⁴ *ibid*.

In 1851, Tucker reflected upon fifteen years of ministry in the Navy by saying, "I much regret to say that I think the Church of England has nearly failed of doing her duty...Instead of preaching Christ, the clergy, I hear, preach nothing, or nearly so, but the Church: and the more the people ardently desire the preaching of Christ, and seek that kind of teaching, the more the clergy think it necessary to reiterate the Church! The Church! I have taken, and intend to take the opposite course, and already I have begun to reap the abundant fruits of it." ³⁵⁵ This is an important point to note as it strongly agrees with Studdert Kennedy and Bonhoeffer's experiences and thoughts when working in a secular environment. We will look more closely at this shared thought towards the end of the chapter as we try to understand why people may think this way.

Tucker describes Sundays at sea as being a time of compulsory attendance, with mess stools brought up from officers' accommodation and rolled up flags being placed upon the deck to be knelt upon for prayers. The Union Jack was placed over a portable prayer desk, and this is a picture of Sundays at sea which continued until the end of the Second War. What is quite disconcerting for a Scot (and Presbyterian) is that Tucker describes the Union flag as being English and all chaplains at this time were still Anglican!

³⁵⁵ *ibid* p268.

The war in Crimea began in 1854, which resulted in a large rise of the number of chaplains employed in the Navy. It would also introduce Naval chaplains to land warfare as they fought alongside the Naval Brigades in the Crimea (apart from the previous and occasional ministry with the Royal Marines ashore on an *ad hoc* basis). This also brought Naval Chaplaincy for the first time, into direct contact with the Royal Army Chaplains Department. Chaplaincy was beginning to professionalise. An Admiralty Circular, number 371, dated 30 May 1859, stated that "...the Senior Chaplain of Greenwich Hospital will be recognised as the head of the Naval chaplains, bear the title of 'Chaplain of the Fleet' and rank with a Rear-Admiral." ³⁵⁶

William Tucker who had served in the Navy for twenty nine years at this point was duly appointed. He immediately sought reports from all Naval commanders upon the state of religion within the Navy. Rather surprisingly, Tucker discovered that things were not quite so bad as he expected. The frequency of communion on board was once a month, a huge increase in frequency, and the meeting place would be in a quiet corner of the ship, normally on a Sunday afternoon. Taylor accords this change in practice to the work of the Tractarian movement and the more acceptable place within Anglicanism of the catholic, high church, liturgical priest. By 1870, another Admiralty Circular ordered Holy Communion to be celebrated once a month on board.

³⁵⁶ *ibid* p281.

Following the war in Crimea, the Navy discovered its vulnerability with wooden hulls. By 1881, the Navy had fifty new ironclad warships, driven by steam. The Service continued to maintain its presence worldwide with the use of sailing ships, but their days were numbered. By 1882, the most serious Naval encounter of the last quarter of the century came about. The war with Egypt started with a Naval bombardment at Alexandria where eight chaplains were embarked. Once success had been achieved through the bombardment, and until troops arrived to hold the ground, Naval brigades were formed up and put ashore. Peace was secured. However, another uprising in the Sudan caused a Naval land force to be inserted in 1884 to protect Egypt.

The Chaplain of a corvette, Charles Todd, who graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford and obtained a *blue* for athletics was present during the battles in Sudan. Todd would be the Chaplain to the landing Naval forces. Todd wrote from Egypt that the force landed west of Suez with two hundred men, and they waded for about three hundred yards, but were unmolested. A camp at Shillook was established and prayers were said by Todd daily at 0600hrs and a Sunday service held where he would preach. Todd was also employed as the mess caterer and spent much of his time foraging for goods and services. He wrote of his time in Camp Shillook, "Last night the Admiral came up to the camp, and he sent for me and said, 'The enemy are in force not far off and an attack is expected. You have influence

over the men and must try and keep them steady as everything depends on that...We are strongly entrenched with sand bags and have two field guns and 2 Gatlings'." ³⁵⁷

On 23rd August, the Naval Brigade fought in a battle at Chalouf, but this time their amphibious landing was opposed and many casualties were taken. By the March of the following year however Todd was involved in a near fatal action which he described vividly as follows:

"The enemy rushed from the ravine, yelling and grinning and dancing, some creeping on all fours to get under the fire of the Gatlings...I saw a cloud of clubs and spears, then the 65th turned and broke. I tried to rally them and while doing so found they had passed me and that I was next to the enemy. One lunged at me with a spear which passed through my coat...and another aimed a blow at my head with a club...but fortunately I was able to keep on my feet, having no weapon I turned and ran to the guns which I found deserted with dead bodies all around them...Then I got to the Marines who were being borne back by the 65th and the 42nd...we were driven back about 500 yards...then we rallied and advanced again...recapturing the guns...A message was sent to me to say that one of our officers was mortally wounded...Two of the special correspondents...helped me to catch a mule...I rode to the sereeba and was just in

³⁵⁷ ibid p299.

time to say the parting prayer with poor Montresor who died while I was holding his hand...He was terribly hacked about...I then rode back to the field. Then began the horrid task of killing the wounded Arabs, it was necessary however as they would take no quarter and tried to kill anyone who approached them...At 6.30 I buried all sailors and Marines in one grave...

How I got out of that risk I can never actually tell. I know I never expected to...I can only tell you what I saw myself...I will tell you, not to brag about myself but because it will please you all, that I am specially mentioned thus 'I consider it my duty to bring to your notice the conduct of the Revd. C.J. Todd, Chaplain of *HMS Euryalus* whose gallantry during the fight and kindness to the wounded were beyond all praise'...I lunched with General Graham after the fight...The burial was a sad task and in my sermon on board yesterday I quite broke down. I have the doleful task of writing letters to the friends of the dead...I am very thankful to God for preserving me." ³⁵⁸

Todd's burial of the dead was described by a civilian AB Wylde who lived in the area of Tamai saying;

"The dead were buried about sunset, and I never remember anything more solemn than the funeral service in the desert. Mr Todd, the chaplain of the *Euryalus*,

³⁵⁸ *ibid* p302.

gave a short address over the graves after he had read the burial service, and nearly all officers who could spare time and General Graham and his staff were present. There seemed to be, a death-like silence over everything, the preacher's voice being the only one heard, and the words of hope and consolation spoken by him went into the hearts of many. At the close of his oration many an eye was dim with hot tears, and I daresay many a heartfelt prayer of thankfulness for the merciful escape many had on that terrible 13th day of March was breathed. The heavens with their light fleet clouds were lighted up with that beautiful after-glow that follows the sunsets at Suakin when the trenches were being covered up, shutting for ever from view the remains of our poor comrades who had fought so well and done their duty in so poor a cause." ³⁵⁹

Todd was an operational Chaplain, an arena where chaplains have never had to explain their role or their usefulness to the Navy. It seems that it is in times of peace that chaplaincy is questioned. Todd retired from the Navy in 1909 and died aged 84 years in 1939. It is to the time of greater operational chaplaincy which we will now turn as we study Naval chaplaincy during the Great War.

"Nothing, nothing in the world, nothing that you may think of, or dream of, or anyone else may tell you; no arguments

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

however seductive, must lead you to abandon that naval supremacy on which the life of our country depends.' (Winston Churchill, 1918)." ³⁶⁰

The First World War started with a terrific bang for Naval chaplaincy. Within a month of the start of conflict three chaplains had been sunk and one had given his life in the service of God and country. One of the chaplains sunk but saved, Wilfred Ellis gives an interesting and chilling account of his experience. His ship, the *Hogue* was sunk by a German U9 submarine along with the *Aboukir* and *Cressy*. It was the *Aboukir's* Chaplain, Edward Robson who lost his life. On 22nd September 1914, Ellis wrote these words;

"It was about 6.30am...that my servant told me the *Aboukir* was sinking. I pulled on clothes and trousers and slippers and ran up on deck just in time to see her heel over and float for some time keel uppermost. We were then struck twice, and we knew it was not a question of mines but of torpedoes and submarines. The *Hogue* settled down very quickly. We threw overboard all that would float, and then those who could swim stripped and jumped clear. There was no panic and orders were obeyed to the very end. I went down with the ship; I remember wondering that I was not afraid. Humanly speaking there was little chance of my being saved, yet strangely enough I never contemplated the possibility of being drowned. I went down a long way

³⁶⁰ Humble R, *The Rise and Fall of the British Navy*, A Queen Anne Press Book. 1986. p7.

and came up breathless with a spar under my arm. Soon afterwards I got another, and on those I kept afloat for about twenty minutes until I was picked up by one man in our small pinnace, which had floated off when the *Hogue* sank...My prayer-book with hymns had remained in my pocket all the time, and we spent the hours of waiting singing all manner of songs and hymns, helping each other as best we could...We were picked up by a Dutch trading vessel, the *Flora*, about mid-day and treated with the greatest kindness." ³⁶¹

Ellis was permanently marked by this experience, suffering hearing difficulties thereafter, but this did not hinder his service. Following his rescue he was taken to a Dutch prisoner of war camp, but later released as a shipwrecked sailor and returned to England. From there he continued his service as a Chaplain serving on *Brittania* and then the battle-cruiser *Tiger*. He then returned to his civilian parish ministry and became Chaplain of Trinity College, Cambridge. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Ellis volunteered his services to the Chaplain of the Fleet and was accepted despite his age. He was appointed on 29 November, 1943 to the Royal Naval Repair Yard, Madras.

The Great War was also the period *par excellence* of temporary chaplains. At the start of the war only five chaplains

³⁶¹ Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains; A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p337.

succeeded in becoming fully commissioned. Forty six however joined as Acting chaplains for Temporary Service. They would serve full-time during the war and then return to civilian employment. During the first three years of the war, Naval chaplaincy employed an additional 127 chaplains. This was the time of great conflict between the British Battle and Battlecruiser Fleets, under Jellicoe and Beatty, in combat with the German High Seas Fleet who were finally defeated at Jutland on 31st May, 1916. These battles fought up and down the east coast of Britain localised the situation for Naval chaplaincy. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Scarborough and Whitby amongst others had all come under attack.³⁶²

The Naval war had come to our home shores as well as to far flung places. Thus did the civilian clergy respond.

What then was the calling for all of these chaplains during the war? Taylor wrote the following, "Opportunities of performing acts of heroic nature do not often present themselves to naval chaplains, even in wartime, for their accustomed duty is to provide standards in thought, comradeship and conduct which enable their shipmates to attend with the requirements of the hour. To continue to do that when a ship is in action is no less heroic than to take part in the actual fighting of the ship. At all times, the chaplain's task, because it is unusual, calls for qualities well beyond those normally expected of the ordained ministry, and in wartime this requirement is greatly increased. A

³⁶² See Bennett G, *Naval Battles of the First World War*. The Chaucer Press Ltd. 1974. p127.

chaplain who acted with signal contempt of danger in a matter of life or death was Robert Peyton-Burbery, chaplain of the cruiser *Suffolk*, who on 7 September 1915 won the Bronze Medal for Gallantry in Saving Life at Sea (the Sea Gallantry Medal) by swimming through surf with a line to the steamer *Pollockshields* when she stranded at Bermuda. His brave action led to the rescue of her crew." ³⁶³

Such examples are common when researching Naval chaplaincy. They are recounted on land through the exploits of the Naval Division and as we have seen at sea. A price for this new found respect towards chaplains however had to be paid. Nineteen chaplains lost their lives, twelve were full-time and seven Acting chaplains' for Temporary Service.

Denominationally the split now becomes an issue. Whilst previously (up until the First World War) there were only a few non-Anglicans attached as Temporary/Reserve chaplains in the Navy, it was with the outbreak of war that other denominations began to feature. During the war, thirty four Acting Roman Catholic chaplains were appointed, and there was one existing Royal Navy Chaplain from the Catholic Branch already in existence. There were twelve Free Church (Acting Wesleyan) chaplains appointed and two Church of Scotland chaplains (RNVR Clyde) who also served. The fairest comment to make upon the ecumenical environment at this time is to say

³⁶³ Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains; A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated Press. 1978. p342.

that the Navy only accepted as Ship's chaplains Anglicans, and this was still very much the church of the Navy.

The first ever chapel built on board a Royal Navy vessel was on the battle-cruiser, *Queen Mary*. The chapel was created not planned for in build. It was built by Captain WR Hall and Commander WM James. James later described how it was done, saying, "Hall was a deeply religious man and our first undertaking was building a chapel. The naval custom was to hold services in fine weather on the quarter-deck and in wet weather on the mess-deck, but there was no special place for communion or special services; a part of the mess-deck shut off by a canvas screen had to suffice. I was able to utilise an upper-deck compartment for the purpose and there was no lack of volunteers to convert it into a chapel. This was the first chapel ever built in a man-of-war. Unlike our other reforms this one was welcomed by many officers, and the Admiralty directed that chapels were to be fitted in the battleships then building." ³⁶⁴ This precedent set brought an increase in general interest in worship throughout the Fleet. During the First War, chaplains were busy both serving operationally and sacramentally at their altars, for the first time ever.

Following the war chaplains numbers greatly reduced as all the Acting chaplains returned to their parishes. The run down in chaplaincy numbers matched the reduction in the Navy

³⁶⁴ *ibid* p362.

generally. During the inter war period, the King approved of a Naval chaplain's Scarf to be worn along with medals, and this was the first development of a Naval chaplain's uniform.

Out of this period comes the name of Robert Reginald Churchill, a Naval Chaplain since 1915. He was known throughout the Fleet as *Reckless Reggie*, on account of his surplice catching fire once on an altar candle. Reggie served for thirty years in chaplaincy and is remembered fondly. During the years 1923-25 Reggie served as a Squadron Chaplain and whilst on board one of his ships, *Carlisle*, his work was remembered as follows. "His cabin had an ever open door, anything he could do for anyone, no matter how big or small, he was always at your service. He entered into every aspect of Naval life, and always carried the longest cigarette case I have ever seen, this was so that he had plenty to hand out, every night he would visit some of the messes & perhaps have a hand of cards or even wash out a few smalls if he saw someone in a tub of water and he preached the shortest but most wonderful sermons, they really did pack a punch..."³⁶⁵ Such was and I guess still is the life of a Naval *Bish*.³⁶⁶

During the inter-war years some advancement was made ecumenically. This debate really started in 1876, when the Roman Catholic Bishops in England requested that the Admiralty place Roman Catholic chaplains on the same footing as

³⁶⁵ *ibid* p365.

³⁶⁶ A *Naval Bish* is the slang term (used with affection) by sailors of their chaplains.

Anglicans. This move, interestingly, was accepted by the Army but not the Navy. The Anglicans very much guarded their rights to providing chaplains for ships.

In 1908, the first Roman Catholic Mass was said at sea by monks from the monastery at Fort Augustus on ships moored in the Cromarty Firth. This was the first Mass said since 1688. By 1914, Roman Catholic standing was that of civilian clergy acting as Officiating chaplains, thus they were acting with no commission. By 1918 however, those Roman Catholic chaplains still serving became, Acting chaplains, thus holding a temporary commission. Their pay was brought into line with the equivalent Church of England (temporary) chaplains. Father Thomas Kent waited 31 years for this commission! On 27 June, 1940, a Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain was appointed with the equivalent rank of a Captain, Royal Navy. On 17 November, 1943, Roman Catholics could become Chaplains, RN.

The Church of Scotland and Free Church ministers had comparable problems. This was a position which like the Roman Catholics derived from the view that if you were not Church of England, you were a dissenter. Taylor writes, "In the days when the Navy was considered English rather than British, only ordination in the Established Church of England would suffer for consideration as a chaplain, as James Shaw, a priest of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, found when he endeavoured to join in 1827...Episcopacy was not the crux of the matter." ³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ Taylor G, *The Sea Chaplains; A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford Illustrated

If Scots wanted to join the Navy it would be on English terms! Like the Roman Catholics, these Church of Scotland and Free Church men suffered a terrible injustice. It was partly corrected on 17 November, 1943, for the Church of Scotland and Free Churches chaplains at least, when they too were made chaplains, Royal Navy. That said, the first non-Anglican to hold a ship appointment was Richard Charlesworth whose ship was *Royal Sovereign*, which he took on in 1942. The first Senior Chaplain for the Church of Scotland and Free Churches was Irving Davies who assumed the position on 10th August, 1942.

At the start of the Second World War there were 104 Naval chaplains. By the end of the war there was a total figure of 534. 333 were Temporary chaplains, 416 were Anglican and 118 non-Anglican. The move to minister to the non Anglicans was coming in. The strain would be felt on chaplaincy almost immediately with the necessity to train the new Temporary chaplains quickly and effectively. Frederick Bunt was responsible for their training between 1940-1943.

He wrote, "...Temporary chaplains. R.N.V.R., had to learn that, as men under authority and naval discipline, they must be prepared to exercise their responsibility in matters requiring charity as well as justice, and to remember that

they had a duty to speak equally frankly to both senior officers and to the ordinary seamen who were in their care as children of God. It was a daunting task, especially for the younger chaplains, whose inexperience was obvious. The overall requirement was self-discipline, not only in private spiritual life and its prayer, meditation and study, but also really caring for those in their spiritual charge. In the intimacy of ship life a man's qualities are quickly assessed, and the sailor soon discerns and trusts the genuine pastor. All chaplains who perform a humble, caring and faithful ministry never regret the years spent in naval service, and they look back to them with happy memories of friendships made and of the joy of 'bringing many sons to glory'." ³⁶⁸ Bunt's words strongly ties in to what was said as regards the *New Army chaplains* during the First World War in Chapter One. It is also a fair assessment of how chaplaincy remains today.

On 13th June, 1940, the Admiralty introduced a special chaplain's cap to be worn. With its introduction came also a chaplain's uniform which was largely supported by the Temporary chaplains but not chaplains, RN. They fought desperately for the right to continue to wear civilian clothing (a throw back to the days of civilian clergy at sea), but by the end of the war most were wearing uniform, partly due to the subversive threat at home. The chaplains continued, however, to wear no rank.

³⁶⁸ *ibid* p393.

Hywell Victor Evans (RNVR) joined the Navy in 1943 and was appointed Chaplain, Third Flotilla Squadron. When once at sea he was invited into Rear-Admiral Burnett's cabin and after deference being shown to the Admiral, he received the following reply, "Come in, Padre, you're an Admiral now." ³⁶⁹ Evans was later to say, "Chaplains carried no rank; we were chameleons, taking our rank from whoever we were with. It was only the second war that put us into uniform at all. This was for our protection - it would have been precarious to have been taken prisoner in civilian clothes." ³⁷⁰

The Atlantic War, fought between June 1940 and Spring 1941 was a desperate one where the U-Boats sunk many Naval and merchant vessels. Taylor writes, "It was a job for the young and reckless, (looking after a Destroyer Squadron) and it meant living in a suitcase if , as frequently happened, there was no permanent cabin available for him to inhabit. In that case he could alternate with the Commanding Officer, by using his sea-cabin (by the bridge) when the ship was in harbour, and his stately after-cabin...when the ship was at sea. Services, and even 'stand up prayers', had to await a return to harbour, when prayers might be said on deck, and the Communion celebrated in a cabin or on board a depot ship alongside." ³⁷¹

Chaplaincy at war had not really changed from Elizabethan times in substance. There was still the operational need for

³⁶⁹ *ibid* p399.

³⁷⁰ *ibid*.

³⁷¹ *ibid* p397.

a ministry of presence and of a shared risk. During the war, like all previous wars, there were some notable examples of great bravery during action. Chaplains at action stations would rove the ship, reassuring people by a word, but mostly simply by their presence. Some chaplains carried the reserved sacrament around their neck to offer to those in need. One example of bravery came from the Chaplain, *Fiji*, who gave his life saving people from the water during the evacuation of Crete in 1941. An international rugby player and strong swimmer, he swam between ship and men in the water rescuing them until, out of energy himself, he passed away on board having brought them all back. He won the posthumous award of the Albert Medal.

When the *Prince of Wales* was sunk by the Japanese on 10 December 1941 whilst protecting Singapore, she lost 327 of her ship's company out of a total of 1612. Her Chaplain, Wilfred Parker was also lost. The Chaplain, it was said, was last seen tending 40 wounded and administering the sacrament in the Cinema Flat which took a direct hit. There are countless other stories of gallantry which could be told. Gerald O'Connell Fitz-Gerald's story is one which is astonishing. Sunk at the same time as Parker off Singapore, he was rescued from the water by the Japanese and made a prisoner of war. He was held in captivity at Macassar for the whole of the war, and was the only Naval Chaplain to become a Japanese prisoner. From January to March 1945, Fitz-Gerald officiated at over 350 burials of both Christian and Jewish services. He was

released on 24th September 1945.

The cost to the individual chaplains must have been huge. In our own day, talk during operations of post traumatic stress disorder is common; then it was largely ignored. David Walters, an R.N.V.R Chaplain, tells a story which marks the reality of such trauma. The story comes from the sinking of the *Khedive Ismail* in the Indian Ocean during 1944;

"We were escorting a convoy from Mombasa to Colombo and we were next in station to the Commodore's ship, the *Khedive Ismail*, which was full of East African troops, British Wrens and nursing sisters. One Sunday afternoon (I was reading Toynbee's *Study of History* on the quarter-deck) suddenly there was a rasping explosion and we saw a column of smoke rise from the *Khedive*. She had been struck by a Japanese torpedo. As 'Action Stations' sounded we ran to our cabins to pick up lifebelts and steel helmets, and as we ran we saw the ship, a couple of cable-lengths away, slipping down into the water. I am told she sunk in little more than twenty seconds.

If my memory serves, well over 1,000 lives were lost, including twenty four Wrens, 51 nursing sisters and 674 African troops. As the ship sank, we saw the tracks of two more torpedoes coming towards us. Mercifully they were both set wrongly, and one went right underneath us amidships and the other lopped along the surface and

narrowly missed our bows. There were two destroyers accompanying the convoy, and they gave chase to the U-boats (I think there were two of them, but we did not see them ourselves). One of the destroyers was rash enough to try to ram a U-boat, and was badly gashed down her side, but she managed to make port after emergency repairs. The old *Hawkins* had almost no weapons we could use against the U-boats. Our guns would not depress enough, and because of the men and the women in the water we could not drop depth-charges. We had to keep on moving or we should have been a sitting target. With great difficulty we lowered a couple of boats and picked up as many of the survivors as possible. It was unfortunate that the majority of those on board had been watching the Sunday afternoon cinema between decks and had not the remotest chance of escape.

One Wren whom we did pick up told me afterwards how a Leading Signaller, on loan to the Commodore's ship from ours, had burst into her cabin and got through the scuttle, and then with his feet against the ship's side, tried to drag her after him. Being wide in the hips she got stuck like a cork in a bottle, but he would not let her go. When they were right under the water an air bubble came to his rescue and impelled her out. Both came to the surface together, and they were picked up by our men. Imagine the difficulty of a

young chaplain ministering to the shocked survivors. Some of them asked me to offer a prayer with them, but they were so distressed by the loss of their friends that there was little place at that moment for thanksgiving. I never felt less adequate before or since." ³⁷²

There are many more such stories of the chaplaincy service ministering amongst the most tragic and difficult circumstances. The history of Royal Navy Commando chaplains (instigated in 1943) contains numerous stories of great valour. In January 1945, the 45 Commando Royal Marines Chaplain, Reginald How won the Distinguished Service Cross during the battle at St. Joostburg, Holland. He received the reward for demonstrating how "...a sense of dignity and reassurance could be brought to what might seem to many to be a purposeless holocaust...(he) continued to minister to the wounded and dying under the most frightful and dangerous conditions in the forward areas of the battlefield and in full view of the enemy." ³⁷³ The Chaplain, 42 Commando Royal Marines, also won the DSC for bravery as did the Chaplain 41 Commando Royal Marines. The Chaplain, 43 Commando Royal Marines, Ross Hook won the Victoria Cross in Yugoslavia. Maurice Ponsonby, 48 Commando Royal Marines, was the first cleric to celebrate communion on French soil, just beyond the beachhead at Ouistrehem, in occupied France. He did so despite

³⁷² *ibid* p423.

³⁷³ *ibid* p430.

being under fire. Sadly, the 42 Commando Royal Marines, Chaplain, Harold Manger, lost his life in the far east on 21 March 1944, of grenade wounds. He was the last Chaplain to give his life during the war.

What was the effect of such service? It is worth considering the words of Captain Litchfield of the *Norfolk*. He wrote of his Chaplain, Ken Matthews, "It would be impossible to exaggerate Ken Matthews' influence in the *Norfolk*. I was myself first Commander & later acting-Captain of the ship, & his value in the ship was certainly greater than that of any other officer. He made her the happiest ship I have ever known. He was loved by every man on board & it is largely his influence that has kept the *Norfolk* spirit alive ever since, as is shown by an attendance of over 100 (last year 106) *Norfolk* wartime shipmates at our annual dinner in Plymouth...Ken also gave up his chaplain's cabin (very roomy) & had it refitted as a Chapel & Quiet Room, taking a much smaller cabin for himself...When Plymouth was blitzed he came to me & asked for leave to go south & investigate men's anxieties for their homes & families, which of course was granted. He was as popular in the wardroom as on the messdecks. Only once did he run into trouble, when a new Captain joined who knew nothing of him or the ship & her ways, & told him he wanted compulsory church & none of his meek and mild stuff in Lessons & Hymns. Ken smiled sweetly & begged him to wait a little while before making it an order. A month later the Captain decided to make no change; 'There's

something about this ship I don't quite understand', he said, 'Everyone seems so happy & things go so well. Better go on as you are'." ³⁷⁴

Taylor's conclusion on Naval chaplaincy was that "...there was no prescription for outstanding success beyond the supreme essentials of the chaplain's own personality, and his clear devotion to his calling. Given these in the first place, the factors which undoubtedly contributed were the regard of the captain and the ship's company (which had to be earned), the reputation of the ship, and obvious avail for the war effort of the operations in which the ship was 'happy' and inspiringly led, and the prospect for the chaplain of a reasonably long stay on board. Some of the most difficult appointments were those undertaken by the chaplains of the squadrons or flotillas, where the change from ship to ship was continual, and getting to know officers and men well was very difficult to achieve. Involvement in successful operations was for any ship the greatest builder of morale." ³⁷⁵

Following the war chaplaincy entered the usual period of reduction as the Acting chaplains with Temporary commissions returned to parish life. In 1962, the Royal Navy changed the commissioning system and chaplains would serve on short careers of 4 years, medium careers of 16 years and full career commissions up to the age of 55 years. Over the last half

³⁷⁴ *ibid* p435.

³⁷⁵ *ibid* p436.

century Naval chaplains have been involved in several instances of operational activity at Korea, Suez and more particularly in Commando service in Northern Ireland. They have played their part during the Gulf War and maintaining the delicate peace in the middle east and now in the Balkans. Humanitarian operations have been launched with Operation Haven in 1991, with the Kurdish crisis and more recently in Nicaragua and Sierra Leone. Since the end of the Second World War, chaplains have remained operational every year, but thankfully on a smaller scale. We are now a Navy fighting to maintain a peace, thus we have operations in peacetime. Whilst there are many instances in this period which we could go into in great depth, we will conclude our short historical journey of Naval chaplaincy looking at our largest conflict since 1945, the Falklands War, and the new form of operational chaplaincy which has emerged in the 1990's namely, humanitarian operations.

Richard Humble writes, "Britain's sudden awakening to the humiliating reality of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands had one advantage, and one only. This was the moral advantage of being the victim of unprovoked aggression in the eyes of world opinion." ³⁷⁶

In New York on the 27th February, 1982, the final negotiating session between the Argentine and British Governments broke up with no clear agreement on the future of the islands. The

³⁷⁶ Humble R, *The Rise and Fall of the British Navy*, A Queen Anne Press Book. 1986. p223.

British felt as if they had some breathing space, but the Argentines warned of other means of resolving the conflict. On 19th March, between fifty to sixty Argentines landed on South Georgia and raised the Argentine flag. By 26th March the Foreign Office started to receive reports of a possible Argentine invasion of the Falklands Islands and on 2nd April, they invaded the islands. A three hour battle ensued between a troop strength of Royal Marines defending Stanley House, the residence of the Governor of the Falkland Islands. Stanley House was taken and the Falkland Islands captured. That day the British government announced that it would be sending a task force, led by Admiral Sandy Woodward to recover the islands, with force if necessary.

Diplomatic efforts advanced quickly within the United Nations and the Security Council passed resolution 502 calling for the end to all hostility and withdrawal of Argentine troops from the Falkland Islands. Argentina seized South Georgia outright that day, 3rd April 1982.

The following day the British Task Group sailed. On the 7th April, Britain declared a two hundred mile exclusion zone around the islands. Nearly three weeks later, on April 25th, the British recaptured South Georgia and on May 1st the campaign to recover the Falkland Islands started for real.

Two days prior to the war starting, Admiral Woodward wrote these words to his wife in a letter...

"The days go by surprisingly fast with no real political change. You cannot help feeling - now here's an extraordinary business. Can we *really* be going to war? Is it me that's in charge of fifteen thousand men and the biggest fleet we've put together in thirty-five years? I never asked for a place in anyone's history book, and I don't view the prospect with any enthusiasm. Particularly if it involves sending old friends up front...the picture is gloomy and politicians are probably going to tie my hands behind my back...and then be angry when I fail to pull their beastly irons out of the fire for them...

As the day goes on, most of the plans for the first few days of battle are set. They are necessarily very flexible, but I've done my thinking about it and consequently feel easier in my mind. Of course, in the final hours/days, options do reduce, so decisions are a bit easier. Even the thought of death has to be faced up to as not-a-very-likely outcome, and taken for what it is-like, unavoidable if it happens. But do your best, and maybe it won't. Generally though, I feel much easier in my mind: our business end is about wrapped up for a few days - it will be a busy time, and it is as well to stop worrying, and 'rest up' to be ready." ³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Woodward A, *One Hundred Days*, Harper/Collins Publishers. 1992. p124.

The war in the air and the sea had started. On May 1st, the British conducted air raids on Port Stanley, Darwin and Goose Green. That day there also followed a naval bombardment on Port Stanley airfield. By May 21st, the Task Force was ready to launch its amphibious landing of 1,000 troops into San Carlos Bay and there then followed an arduous 'yomp' across East Falkland towards Port Stanley.

On May 28th, Darwin and Goose Green were re-captured with a loss of 17 British and 250 Argentines. By June 9th, the British forces were ready to launch their final offensive on the high ground above Port Stanley. Three objectives remained to be gained, Mount Longdon, by the 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment and the features called Two Sisters by 45 Commando, Royal Marines. 42 Commando would be tasked to take Mount Harriet. All three objectives were secured on the evening and days of 11/12th June. On 13th June, the 5th Brigade attacked Tumbledown mountain, Mount William and Wireless Ridge. The 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment secured Wireless Ridge, the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, Tumbledown and the 7th Gurkha Rifles, Mount William. The surrender came soon afterwards.

It was in amongst all of this that a Naval Chaplain called Albert Hempenstall would ply his trade. Hempenstall was commando trained and serving with 42 Commando, Royal Marines. The point of being commando trained is an important one. All

Royal Marines chaplains (sent by the Navy to serve with the 'Corps') are expected to complete the Royal Marines Commando Course at the Commando Training Centre, Lympstone. If they pass, like all Royal Marine recruits, they will earn the coveted Green Beret. The chaplains gain a great insight into the Marines, to whom they will minister, by completing this arduous course, indeed a strong sense of belonging to the Commando Corps comes from passing the course. Both chaplains and Marines become one as Commandos.

This shared experience (largely of physical and mental suffering) is instrumental in enabling a sound ministry to some of the toughest troops within the British Forces. This is an especially important theme to note as it returns us to thoughts left us by the Padres during the Great War. As we noted in chapter one, during the war, many Padres felt unprepared for operational combat in the trenches, both physically and spiritually. Many thus felt they failed in their ministry to their men.

Hempenstall writes as regards the Falklands War,

"It was not unusual for a Marine to have to carry upwards of 50 kilogrammes, more if he was issued with extra ammunition. The Chaplain was no exception and, though I carried no weapon, I was loaded with additional medical supplies. The time of year was the period of the Falklands winter, mostly wet and windy with a light covering of snow. Fortunately, 42

Commando Royal Marines -my unit- had just returned from a winter deployment here in Norway and we were well-prepared to face all the challenges of nature and the enemy. I cannot stress enough the importance of being physically and mentally prepared for hardship. In the Royal Navy every Chaplain who will serve with the Royal Marines is sent to Commando Training Centre to earn his Green Beret, the symbol of passing the Commando Course. This long and arduous course tests a man's real character to the nth degree. It teaches a Chaplain to be self-sufficient in field conditions and also to be part of a close-knit group of highly professional fighting men. I firmly believe that if a Chaplain cannot cope in such conditions, he will not be able to minister in time of war.

Identification with the discomfort of the men and the importance of training leads me onto my next point. The Commando Course which I have just mentioned proves to the men, and to the Chaplain himself, that he is capable of ministering to them in all conditions. Training on exercises continues and develops his skills. If a Chaplain avoids discomfort and only makes occasional visits to the men in the field when it is wet and cold and then returns to the relative comfort of the Officers' Mess, he will have no credibility with them...While on exercise or in actual combat, the pastoral opportunities offered to the Chaplain are

immense. Sharing meals which we cooked in our mess tins provided fellowship of a very natural kind. Let us not forget that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper began as a simple shared meal. Often a man would share his deepest thoughts and feelings when we had food or a warm drink together." ³⁷⁸

Another theme which came out of the Great War (which has parallels today for Padres), was the lack of confidence they sometimes had in their usefulness to the men and the situation. Some, as we noted, became combatants and stretcher bearers to feel more useful, indeed the French Priests remained both Padres and combatants! Hempenstall however writes these words of encouragement for chaplains following the Falklands conflict,

"Be sure of your ministry - priest first, soldier second. Many of the men are not openly religious, yet they want their Chaplain to be with them and to pray for them and their families. They want a priest. So, be sure that you are confident in your calling to the priesthood. When a soldier asks a question, he will know from your answer and the look in your eyes if you are confident in your faith. And if you don't know the answer, be man enough to admit it and tell the truth.

A question I am often asked is 'Did you carry a

³⁷⁸Hempenstall A, *Norwegian Chaplains Presentation; The Falklands War and Op HAVEN*, DGNCS Library, Victory Building, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. p1.

weapon?' The answer is 'No'. The Commanding Officer has 800 Royal Marines, but only one Chaplain. The chaplain's role is different and one sign of this is the absence of a weapon. Besides, the Geneva Convention forbids it. Also, when working with prisoners of war, it is important not to appear as a threat...We have a saying in England: 'Never be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly use'. As priests, we are channels of God's grace - and must give God's Holy Spirit the opportunity to flow freely through us. God often uses the ordinary, everyday situations of life to bring about his purposes. Therefore, we must engage in the real lives of our men. I always tried to be practical...at the end of a war you also have a ministry to the enemy. An army should be judged not only on how well its soldiers fight, but also on the manner in which they treat a defeated enemy. It is a real test of civilisation. Many of the young Argentinean soldiers were conscripts who were misled and lied to by their officers about where they were going, their mission and how they would be treated if captured. They were terrified of the British and were greatly relieved when they were well treated.

As we approached Stanley, we discovered a refrigerated store packed to the roof with prime Argentinean beef. We shared this food with many of the Argentinean prisoners, who had gone hungry whilst their officers

ate well. As I look back, I think of the words of Christ that we must love our enemy and also feed the hungry. Even in the midst of war, God's grace was present...The experience of being a priest in war was a positive one. On the long return trip by sea, numbers attending church services increased. I asked some why they had come on the way back and not on the way down, and their honesty was praiseworthy in that they admitted to a certain feeling of hypocrisy if they only sought God's help when facing trouble. They felt that they should say thanks to God for the help they had received and for bringing them back safely." ³⁷⁹

Once again, we read in the history of chaplaincy, of the vital component of presence where there is danger. Preparedness also becomes an important theme, both physically and spiritually. To know what one does as a Padre at a time of war and to feel it contributes, and thus feel useful as a Priest of God, is vitally important for a Chaplain and his ministry. This preparedness requires both physical and spiritual discipline from the Chaplain. If prepared properly, Hempenstall suggests, a Chaplain can bring God's Word and presence to his men, even in the most awful situation. We turn now in our final chapter to thoughts of better spiritual and physical preparedness of clergy, encouraged in and through team ministries where mutual respect and trust exist.

³⁷⁹ *ibid* p3.1

Chapter Five: A Practical Theology of Chaplaincy

I. A STOCKTAKING OF CHRISTIANITY

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote from Tegel Prison,

"Outline for a Book

I should like to write a book of not more than 100 pages,
divided into three chapters:

1. A Stocktaking of Christianity.
2. The Real Meaning of Christian Faith.
3. Conclusion." ³⁷⁹

Sadly, Bonhoeffer would never be given the opportunity to write this book. We shall use this outline as the basis for our own discussion on *religionless Christianity* in our post modern society. Our aim will be to judge in our conclusion where we might go as a church, looking at both the chaplaincy and civilian spheres.

I.1 Background

Our stocktaking of Christianity, the content of Bonhoeffer's first chapter in his book, has taken up much of the research in this work. Chapter One considered chaplaincy during operations over the last decade within 3 Commando Brigade, and we backed up these thoughts with some hard statistics from our HMS OCEAN study. The research of Grace Davie helped put these

³⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison; the Enlarged Edition*. SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p380.

statistics into a broader environment, to allow any thought on Christianity, within our culture in the Royal Navy, to be more balanced and critical. What we discovered in chapter one, was that the vast majority of people today no longer think denominationally, although there may exist a tie to either a nationalist or culture group which would be expressed in terms of church denomination. This expression however has no depth of belief, a point highlighted by Davie, and expressed by poor church attendance figures. We did find though, that these post modern individuals, do have a yearning for spiritual matters and a willingness to come together, along with the people from their own communities, to explore such matters. Such opportunities are perhaps best offered by a Chaplain during an operational situation when there is both the time and desire to move forward together as friends in community.

Out of this environment, truly ecumenical Christian communities emerge with a dynamic of their own beyond the bounds of the institutional church. This is a church within a church in reality, but not in name or denomination. Our findings discovered that the men and women within the Royal Navy are very comfortable with this arrangement and seek to be a part of this military, Christian community. We have noted the importance within this environment of the leader of this community being truly one of them, sharing the same hardships as that community and thus truly becoming, of one company. Such Christian leadership creates community between fellow clerical members, beyond denominational affiliations and

the same is true of all members whether of church background or not.

These thoughts and findings from chapter one were then held up against the writings and findings of some of the Great War Padres, and in particular Studdert Kennedy in chapter two. We discovered that the alienation between the working class man and women and the church, which existed prior to, during, and deepened further after the Great War, is no different to the outlook of the post modern man or woman within the Royal Navy and our broader society. We heard of how *Tommy* respected Jesus but not the church which seemed to stand for privilege. We read how Tommy loved Padres when they seemed worthwhile to them, by caring for them *up the line*. We learnt that when the Padres themselves felt worthwhile they did well. Studdert Kennedy stressed both in his writings and in the way he lived his life, that the cross was the example of service of Padre to men and out of this cross grew a theology and language which was understandable to the men because it was a shared tongue learnt through shared experience. There was commonality which brought community. Thus, things have not much changed today for chaplains working with the un-churched, indeed the post war reports stressed ecumenism and ministry teams as a future model of civilian ministry!

It was at this point that we met George MacLeod and noted the influence of Tubby Clayton and Toc H upon him and his future ministry with the Iona Community. The working in ecumenical

teams for mission amongst the un-churched within the Iona Community arose out of MacLeod's perceived failure of Toc H chaplaincy of which he was a part in 1921. In many ways the Iona Community was an answer to that failure. MacLeod discovered, like the chaplaincy reports from the Great War, that mission to the un-churched was a difficult business and young clerics needed support. The best form of support was within a community of clerics where a mutual prayer life could be followed. Within this discipline would men be nurtured, to enable them to go out once more and bring the gospel to their people. But this would not be within an isolated religious community setting, for they would live and work in the church extension areas whilst remaining in community, just like the Padres with their units during the war.

Our conclusion in chapter two was that a theology of chaplaincy was developing which Kennedy spoke of as his *theology of the cross*. It is best explained through his war memorial which he designed and which still stands outside his old church in Worcester. This memorial is a crucifix with head held high, revealing the Christ that suffered and continues to suffer on the cross, even today. This continuous crucifixion will occur until end times, for Christ will suffer as we continue to suffer. Through such suffering, our God shows us how much He loves us. The raised head on Kennedy's cross (like a Christus Rex) shows however the ultimate truth, that in the crucifixion there is resurrection and thus eternal hope. Suffering is not thus the end, but rather, the end is

in a God who cares for us and loves us, and continues to suffer with us. To Kennedy this theology was the only theology that could make sense within a Christian context of the carnage of the Western Front. The strongest criticism Kennedy was to make of the First World War chaplaincy reports was that they suggested all sort of structural change without an accompanying theology of change, based around an incarnational theology of the cross.

This theologically and chronologically led us into chapter three and to a study of the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Here we learnt of a life of theological, social and personal struggle. The personal and social challenges which faced Bonhoeffer would ultimately be the driving force which would cause theological writings which spoke of *religionless Christianity* in a world come of age. The social and personal struggles all revolved around the Nazi threat to his church through the Aryan Clause. This clause would firstly attack friends of his within the church, who were of Jewish background and then latterly this anti semitism would spread and attack all those of Jewish stock including his twin sister's husband. This would result in Sabine his twin, being forced to flee Germany. It would happen in 1938, a time when the authorities were also persecuting some of Bonhoeffer's ordinands in training for the Confessing Church. We also noted in chapter three, that the *Reichspogromnacht* of November 1938, was the final straw which forced Bonhoeffer towards action and involvement in the physical overthrow of Hitler.

This in turn would result in him becoming less and less connected to formal institutional church structures and being simply a cleric in a world he declared, *had come of age*. The *Reichspogromnacht* would also result in a final theological move for Bonhoeffer, when he would state that the Jewish race were already within God's chosen and saved people along with Christians. Just as Bonhoeffer's involvement in the formation of the Confessing Church showed his belief in a non denominational and creedal church, as being *the thing itself*, so it was the *Reichspogromnacht* that opened him up into a multi faith environment theologically.

Thus did the phrase *religionless Christianity* emerge and grow out of Bonhoeffer's struggle with anti semitism between 1933 and 1943. The Confessing Church is an example of how a non denominational church can and at times must emerge when the existing churches can no longer cope. The failure of the Confessing Church to survive showed Bonhoeffer that what matters most is not the institution but the members and their faith. *Religionless Christianity* is thus about what is left when there is no denomination or indeed institution called a church.

It speaks of small groups of people serving others and representing Christ in their communities. It speaks of loss of specific privilege and status, as being a good thing, and individuals maintaining their faith as a community through a secret discipline of sacrament and prayer. This will only

be visibly revealed to the world through the love these Christians show to the world. Such was how this new community would grow. Once more themes of community, service and discipline are emerging for Christians who will live in an un-churched, post war environment (or a *world come of age* as Bonhoeffer would say).

Chapter four took this work into a current context for Naval Chaplaincy studies. Like the Great War Padres, as Naval Chaplains we have noticed that chaplaincy is about being where people are to be effective. We have noted that to be effective one has to truly belong and this was most strongly expressed in the words of Albert Hempenstall after his experiences following the Falklands War. The Royal Navy Chaplaincy situation is thus no different to the Royal Army Chaplains Department to which Studdert Kennedy and Tubby Clayton belonged. The challenges are the same, the solutions similar. We have noted however that the Naval Chaplaincy Service, has a historical preference for Church of England Priests and how this has changed in the last decade with any denominational chaplaincy.

Our work is now ready for conclusion, where we will examine a possible *non religious interpretation* for ministry today. However, before we proceed to any conclusion, we must conduct our final stocktaking of Christianity. Firstly we will look at the thoughts of John Leveck in his book, "The Potential Church", and then we will consider the model of ministry

achieved in a civilian church situation in Glasgow, which successfully reached, within normal parish boundaries, large numbers of the un-churched men and women that only the best of the Padres could meet and influence during the First War. We will then examine why this civilian church managed to achieve such contact with the ordinary man and woman when so many failed to make contact. Finally, we will bring our debate up to date by looking at the most recent recommendation for change within the Church of Scotland, aimed at bridging the gap between the ordinary man and woman in the street and the church, namely the "Church Without Walls", proposal.

I.2 A New Model: The Potential Church

Like Macleod, John Levack in his book, *The Potential Church*, focuses his attention on the fact that community is found in the parish setting and thus it is where one's attention should be focussed in bringing the Gospel to the people. Levack however does not recommend any structural change to the parish system, unlike MacLeod and as we shall see the "Church Without Walls" proposal. What Levack recommends is that the church should use the existing system better.

He writes, "The first mistake that every novice makes, and which some go on making all their lives, is to think that 'the people who are there' means the congregation. The Scottish reformers knew better than that. Perhaps it was easier for them...their aim being a church and a

school in every parish. The parish is still with us as a meaningful device in rural areas, but we must face the fact that we have become an urban society, which has, in the main, lost any sense of community, and in the modern city a territorial partition for ecclesiastical purposes is not always very cogent. And so we tend to accept as a fact the popular estimate of the situation, which is that the parish system has broken down, and we ransack our available resources to try to find some available substitute. But is there any? We have seen what happens when the congregation takes the place of the parish as the seat of the spiritual effort; the outward look is bedimmed and activity tends to be domestically centred, in other words, the Church ceases to be the Church."³⁸⁰

Here we must return briefly to Davie's statistics which revealed a latent Christianity in the post modern Britain. These figures showed that the vast majority of British people regarded themselves as Christian and had a form of faith structure to uphold that belief. However, Davie records that they did not belong to a church congregation or attend worship on a regular basis. The figures from the HMS OCEAN study showed that these individuals, especially when they are living in a permanent relationship, will return to a form of church attendance, when on operations at sea. This attendance of church arises out of the shared experiences of the community

³⁸⁰ Levack JG, *The Potential Church*, Saint Andrew Press. 1982. p92.

at sea, which engenders a sense of belonging, ownership and responsibility towards one another. Levack is thus ushering us away from a gathered community church setting for evangelism, back into one of a parish situation. What new ideas for connecting church to community does Levack offer against MacLeod's community team ministries? He writes,

"The fact is that there is a bridge between Church people and the 'un-churched', whose existence we have failed to realise, and which we have certainly never used as we should or could. Here we return to our theme of baptism, and the undoubted fact that there are in every parish, a great many people who have been baptised, but who have never taken full cognisance of that fact. We have been concentrating on the Communion roll (*Church of Scotland*) of the congregation, when we ought to have been looking at the possibility of establishing a *roll of the baptised persons, not in the congregation, but in the parish.*" ³⁸¹

The purpose of this roll would be as a simple aid to mission. It would probably involve a *knock on door* study asking if people are baptised and by which church. Levack speaks of an approach which is common amongst all the churches in the parish. Information can be shared. With this information all the congregations in the parish would be forced to remember that a great number of individuals are indeed baptised, yet non-attendees. There has been a break in their church

³⁸¹ *ibid* p95.

connection, for a child educationally and for an adult in all manners. Baptism of course is accepted across the denominations so the churches could concentrate, as Levack argues, on the things that they agree about. This is always a good start. There could be a strong local emphasis thus placed upon all the churches following up baptised children and adults. Levack says, "Perhaps even this is too visionary an aim, involving as it would a situation where, for example, a messenger from a Kirk Session of the Church of Scotland would approach a lapsed Roman Catholic and say to him, 'You were baptised in a catholic church - don't you think the time has come for you to renew your fellowship with that church - or some other branch?' This is the real difficulty in the way of such an idea. For we have not yet learned to present Christ to the world; we tend rather to present 'the Church as it is at present'." ³⁸² This is of course what we noted when looking at Naval chaplaincy and the worries of a nineteenth century Chaplain of the Fleet.

Levack believes that more thought needs to be put into the direction of these ideas on baptism, but that the church, if it truly wants to be a parish church, must go beyond even baptised outreach. He writes, "It is time now to remind ourselves that the Church's total outreach extends far beyond those who have been baptised. This is only, as it were a beginning; and indeed we have designated it a bridge between

³⁸² *ibid* p101.

the obvious, active Church and the vast number of people who have never come within the sphere of the Church's influence. To refer to the latter as the 'un-churched masses' suggests that they are a coherent group or congeries of groups, out there by themselves somewhere, and the Church has to go 'out' and find them. The fact is that they are in our midst, not just 'on our doorstep' but often within our apparent thresholds, as well as being in many instances far distant and manifestly out with our competent range." ³⁸³ What are we to do then to bring these folk to an understanding and faith in Christ?

Levack writes, "The only basic cure for it is a return to the New Testament meaning of the Church. Jesus himself shines out and attracts men to him; then those who have joined his fellowship, by living the life that is in him, bring others to the point of asking questions. The visible Church never knows where the potential Church begins or ends; at Pentecost you may be able to count the number of tongues, but never the number of ears, and the Holy Spirit is at work in both...This is the mood for which Pentecost has a truth to proclaim, a light to shine. For the Christian Church is founded, not only on the likely truth that God's Holy Spirit speaks in his Church, but also on the most unlikely truth that there are ears and hearts and minds outside the Church, and apparently out with its reach and span, which are

³⁸³ *ibid.*

attuned by the same spirit to the hearing and receiving and doing of that same word. This must be the dominating thought for the missionary Christian which every Church member is pledged to be." ³⁸⁴

Where then does this all lead? Levack argues to and through the doors of the church. A unification comes of all mankind at this point when they gather for worship of the incarnate God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Here, there is a unification of all Christian worship, for the church member who is true to his baptism will join in this worship.

To conclude on Levack's notions of *The Potential Church*, which is invisible, he would argue that the church must have a roll of baptised persons within each parish and be ecumenical in spirit by encouraging all baptised Christians back, to the church of their family or choice. He recognises that there may be some difficulties here, but calls for us to keep our vision locked on the building up of Christ's body throughout the parish and thus to spread our nets farther, integrating in society without overtly forcing Christianity on the un-churched masses. In time, people will respond to the Pentecost Spirit and join in the fellowship of the church because they have become Christians and necessarily Christians must worship. Thus, is the body of Christ maintained and expanded in a modern era.

³⁸⁴ *ibid* p104,

Levack's views are laudable in many ways. From the statistics from HMS OCEAN, the parents of baptised children do often attend the ecumenical church service at sea, along with those married in a church. Clearly, as we noted, the church's rites of passage do work in that they make a connection with the parishioners. But what our statistics from HMS OCEAN and from Davie clearly showed was that this is not enough in the post modern situation. For the civilian church figures show that few people married in a church or whose children have been baptised attend regularly. They are believers who do not belong. My thesis suggests that for people to be attracted back to the church, the minister must be in the same position as a Chaplain. He or she must truly belong to that community which they serve. This was a point especially noted by MacLeod and the early Iona Community Ministers who lived and worked within their parishes in true community.

Today, the problem exists for the church that the parish system now often requires ministers to cover several communities within one parish. Clearly they cannot live in them all. Ministers are now like the modern General Practitioner who works out of one centre, which cares for a large area, to which people come when they have a need. So the post modern mind comes to church to get married, get the children baptised and for a family funeral.

With the fragmentation of society and breakdown of community life as shown by Davie, managing to pull communities together

in the sense of a ship's company would be very difficult. Thus, whilst this thesis would agree with Levack that baptism is an important tool in parish evangelism, the church continues to lose numbers indicating that it continues to fail to engage with people in community. It is thus to another parish experiment which we shall turn to see if it suggests a more substantive model than Levack's.

I.3 A Light in Bridgeton

This is the story of a small church in the East End of Glasgow. "One Sunday in 1929 Sydney Warnes approached a group of young men standing at one of Bridgeton Cross's nine corners and asked them if they could show him the way to Barrowfield Parish Church. One of them stepped forward. 'Yes, sir, and we'll take you there so that you'll be safe.' It was the era of the Glasgow gangs. Passers-by in London Road turned to watch the little man in the clerical collar and the frock coat who was being escorted by a crowd of the notorious *Billy Boys* in their mufflers and bunnets. Such was Sydney Warnes's introduction to a parish which would have disappeared if the right man had not arrived at the right moment - and in the right way." ³⁸⁵ Here's the first rub. God needs the right men and women, in the right places, to lead the people of the parish and congregation. This is not the form of leadership which today has been overtaken with management ideals. This is the form of leadership which one witnesses within the

³⁸⁵ Sim JG, *A Light in Bridgeton*, St. Francis-in-the-East Publication. 1955. p1.

trench warfare of life. This is the form of ministry of leadership for which MacLeod and Bonhoeffer were training their ordinands. For the Christian ministry, this is a taking charge which arises out of first having being *taken charge of* by God in Christ.

In Sydney Warnes case he was *taken charge of* by his Lord and sent to a church built only fifty years earlier, but which sadly had already fallen into disrepair. Originally, Barrowfield Parish Church was built amongst the tenements and the mills of the East End of Glasgow, in a place called Bridgeton, which was a vibrant and popular place to dwell prior to the Great War. Following the war things had changed. Industrial strife brought economic hardship to the area and spiritually, like the rest of the land there was unease over the church and her teachings in light of the war.

Sim writes, "After the first World War men returned, disillusioned, to the uncertainties of industrial life. One of them, standing in Queen Mary Street and pointing to the church, told its minister: 'When I was in there I was taught *Thou shall not kill* and *Thou shall not steal*. Then they took me to the army and inside six weeks I was as big a thief as anybody. I am not coming back.' There were others like him. Many families who, by dint of hard work and thrift, had bettered their social position, moved away to the suburbs and gradually dropped their connection with the down-town

church. Those who were left were doomed to be the victims of economic disaster. The Church no longer spoke either to the people or for the people. These factors, coupled with an unhappy ministry, dragged Barrowfield down to the shadow of a congregation. When the vacancy in the charge came in 1929 the Session Clerk and the Treasurer resigned and departed, leaving a tiny remnant to its unenviable fate. After lengthy discussions it was moved in Glasgow Presbytery that the charge be suppressed. It was then that the Minister of St. Mary's Church, Partick, rose in his place and made a passionate plea to the Presbytery not to retreat from the unhappy situation but to accept it as a challenge. 'To take down the flag in a place where thousands are in urgent need of the ministrations of the Church would be tragic for the Church'." ³⁸⁶

Presbytery agreed and the Home Board provided the resources for a stipend to be paid. But no-one came forward. By this time the church had less than thirty members and the gas and water was cut off. Warnes, the Minister who saved Barrowfield Church at Presbytery was in a good charge in Partick. But he could not rest. Sim writes, "He went to Dr. John White and volunteered to attempt the job. A few hours before his Induction to the congregation and parish of Barrowfield in January 1930, the plaster of the vestry ceiling fell in.

³⁸⁶ *ibid* p2.

Fourteen members rose in their places to confirm his call." ³⁸⁷

The little man Warnes, like Studdert Kennedy when in Worcester, quickly became a well-known figure in the area. He started with reclaiming the lost members. Soon the church was being cleaned up by volunteers. On Sundays, services followed the pattern of a children's service in the morning and for adults, an afternoon and evening service. Things were building up, but during the mid-week there was only one organisation, a prayer group.

Warnes also recognised however that for the development of Barrowfield Church more than simply good leadership would be required. Sim writes, "Sydney Warnes knew, however, that the old pattern would never meet the needs of Bridgeton in 1930. The depression had struck the industrial masses a shattering blow and thousands of able-bodied men had nothing better to do than to stand about in groups at every street corner...The Church had no place in their lives. They could not afford to be respectable and the Church was only for the respectable."

³⁸⁸ Warnes thus led from the front. He spoke of Christ's love, through the only means possible (Kennedy found them shoes, Bonhoeffer resisted), Warnes opened the back hall of the church for the men to meet and play various games. Soon the hall was too small.

³⁸⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸⁸ Sim JG, *A Light in Bridgeton*, St. Francis-in-the East Publication. 1955. p3.

Sim writes, "One day, Sydney Warnes was standing in the empty church, which was so much useless space on six days of the week, when he saw a vision of that space dedicated to a new usefulness. Immediately, he went to the telephone and confided in a number of ministers of wealthier churches his day-dream of a church gutted to a shell, of a floor thrown across the building where the galleries had been, with the Church as the Upper Room and a suite of halls below. They were unhelpful... he got in touch with the Rev. JAC Murray of Park Church, Glasgow, who immediately responded. Between them Warnes and Murray raised the money required, the gigantic sum in those days of £2,200, by appeals to public-spirited individuals and official bodies...On September 18th, his birthday, Sydney Warnes saw the workmen begin to tear down the old interior and by the end of the year the reconstruction was complete. The upper storey provided a simple intimate church which could still seat over five hundred. Downstairs there was a large hall, a billiard room with a full-sized table, donated by a Glasgow Regimental Club and a reading room, even the basement was refashioned to provide a set of baths and a new boiler house." ³⁸⁹

Sim described Warnes idea as being a *vision of a new usefulness*. The spiritual is grounded in reality. Thus do both become *worthwhile*, to God and to man, as *Woodbine*

³⁸⁹ *ibid* p3.

Willie would say.

A new beginning followed the *new usefulness* for Barrowfield Parish Church. Warnes gave the church a new name, St. Francis in the East. His *Pals Club* attracted a daily membership of five hundred, where amongst it all they came to Warnes to seek his ministrations in Christ's name. Sim wrote, "They knew by his many generous acts that he was selflessly devoted to their welfare and they accepted his authority as they did no other man's." ³⁹⁰ Such is the true calling of the parish minister. The church grew where it had been dead. A woman's fellowship group on a Wednesday afternoon had three hundred members. Sunday attendance over the four years had gone from thirty to three hundred attendees. However, things were about to change, for Warnes and his wife, who had greatly shared in his ministry, were to move on in 1934. Sim concluded, "They and those who had laboured with them in obedience to the Spirit had seen a vision become a reality and a new light shine out among the dark mills and tenements to encourage the hearts of a people who felt that society itself had forsaken them. To the Church, they mattered, for Christ's sake." ³⁹¹ Warnes had shown how the church should be the church and what an effect that it could have on people's lives.

Warnes was replaced by a young minister called Arthur Gray, who had just finished his time as a probationer in Partick.

³⁹⁰ *ibid* p5.

³⁹¹ *ibid* p7.

He remained at St. Francis in the East for fifteen years. Gray picked up where Warnes left off, and in 1942, along with eleven boys, much vision and some dedicated followers they transformed an old church, three blocks from St. Francis, into a Youth Club. The aim was to extend the facilities on offer at the church hall. The Club or Church House, as it was and is known, contained a gymnasium, games and crafts rooms, a library, canteen and a chapel. A strong group of volunteers helped run the Club, and the Home Board of the Church of Scotland paid for two youth workers. The Iona Community supplied a girls' leader and MacLeod bought a manse for the Minister out of his own pocket.³⁹² Gray quickly became known for his ability to identify with the needs of his community.

Sim writes, "With the young people he had the profound influence of one who could accept them as they were yet, without coercion, could lead them into an awareness of the realities of the Christian Faith. They would listen to his quiet voice in the Chapel with rapt attention as he talked to them about spiritual things in terms of their own experience. In the canteen afterwards, he would slip up to a lad and, with that characteristic inclination of the head and a chuckle in his voice, would say, 'I hear you're saving up to buy a new goalie for the Clyde.'...He not only shared men's interests. He shared their problems and

³⁹² The Church of Scotland would latterly supply two deacons for the team ministry and so in many ways St Francis in the East and Church House became the one shining church example of missionary outreach, in a team environment, recommended by MacLeod in 1935.

anxieties, their hopes and ambitions, their joys and successes. He was the heart and soul of Church House and the bridge between it and St. Francis itself, three blocks away. Young people began to invade the gallery of the church and feel at home there. In St. Francis, each Christmas Eve the members of Church House dramatised the Nativity story for a packed congregation of parishioners and they came to know the Faith that belonged to them." ³⁹³

What Gray showed clearly in his time at St. Francis was that one needed a place to convey the Christian message to people, as much as one needed the message itself. Just as a Chaplain needs his ship, so does the Minister need his place. Like Studdert Kennedy, Gray conveyed much of the message through his self identification with his parishioners and his ability to speak in their language (Kennedy's, *Kingdom vernacular*, or Bonhoeffer's *non-religious language*). By 1955, St. Francis in the East had 710 communicant members, 330 in Sunday Schools and a youth club at Church House with 300 kids.

The Reverend Dr. Arthur Gray, it was said once stood in Queen Mary Street, beside the church and said, 'Providence has been good to this place.' And so it was. For in the ministries to follow, St. Francis would continue to grow. The key was that it continued to meet the needs of the people of its parish.

³⁹³ *ibid* p11.

It had to remain *worthwhile*. The fifties saw John Sim fulfil a strong ministry and in 1960 he was followed by Bill Shackleton. Shackleton was ably assisted with work at Church House by Youth Leaders such as Geoff Shaw, George Buchanan-Smith and John Webster. All three of these dynamic individuals would move onto ministries with a direct contact to the world. Church House would be their first taste of such a ministry. Shackleton's background was one which came out of three years as Assistant Minister to Sim at St. Francis, followed by two years as an Iona Community *worker-priest* working within the parish, where he ended up teaching locally. He lived in a flat within *the Club*.

The church was still strong and Church House flourishing. In 1962, twelve double decker buses left Bridgeton for Troon for the summer Sunday School trip! In 1963, realising that there was a lack of contact with the men of the parish, a Men's Regnal Circle was formed. This was a *club*, based on the theme of a *Pals Club* from the First World War. In fact it was started by a Padre of that war, Donald Standfast. Here, Studdert Kennedy's thought and actions, shared by Standfast, would be transported to Glasgow. It all dated back to February 29th, 1918, when twelve men of the 2/1 Wessex Field Ambulance asked Standfast to form an association born out of his *soldier's club* which he led previously at the front.

Shackleton writes, "They worked out their aims and principles as follows - 'Our essential idea is to form a Fellowship in

which we may assist each other to live the Christian life.' They developed this to state that 'living' or 'dying' they felt fellowship with Christ to be their greatest need. They asserted that religion is about the world's affairs, that their fellowship in no way implied superiority over other men, that they were seeking to safeguard their 'higher natures' as human beings, and finally, they were convinced Christ was with them 'to the end'. Thus, the basic ideas behind Regnal were there from the start."³⁹⁴ It helped in the trenches and also in the slums of the East End. Here men of the faith would meet men who could not bring themselves into church on a Sunday. Noticeably, they could manage to attend *the Regnal* on a Monday night. A community was forming where the church and un-church both belonged.

The situation for St. Francis in the East has changed today. Once more the area is one where people no longer have a connection to the church. Church House remains active, but with a much younger group in attendance. The youth and young adult population has gone from its doors. The sense that the church is at the centre of the community no longer exists and the church has an air of a gathered community. It needs a Sydney Warnes and yet I suspect that would not be enough today. Society has changed. Bridgeton now feels like a place that once had a community flavour, but that has gone. The atmosphere is one of impersonal, modern housing where people

³⁹⁴Shackleton W, *At Prayer*, The Regnal League. 1979. p11.

live in isolation. It is to this situation that the church must breakthrough.

We take with us thoughts of church success where the people of the parish are met by a church which serves their needs. As a servant church it reveals the love of God in Christ and this service comes with a sacrificial cost borne from a living theology of the cross. Men and women of vision are required to lead this church and if they uphold their spiritual life through a community rule of faith then all the better. The St. Francis in the East and Church House situation involved a team ministry ordained and lay bringing a variety of gifts to the team's outreach to its parish. MacLeod's ideas from 1935 of a brotherhood of ministers and lay people, working in team ministries in the poorer areas, living within a shared rule of life seems to have worked, although on a much smaller scale than he had once hoped. Levack's mission through baptism can thus be fulfilled through the team concept in prayerful community. But should the structure of the church remain as it is with its geographically based parish system, or should it reform beyond parish structure, that it might meet up in community with today's post modern individual? Is the time of the one Minister, one parish now over?

I.4 A Church Without Walls

"In 1999 the General Assembly (of the Church of Scotland) appointed a Special Commission to re-examine in depth the

primary purposes of the Church and the shape of the Church of Scotland as we enter into the next Millennium; to formulate proposals for a process of continuing reform; to consult on such matters with other Scottish Churches; and to report to the General Assembly of 2001." ³⁹⁵ What then were the recommendations for reform for the Church in the new millennium? Firstly, the report strongly recognises that, "The Church 'works' where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is through these relationships that the Gospel is spread. In each place the Church is different. There is no one model that fits all. We rejoice in the diversity within the Church. We celebrate and encourage it." ³⁹⁶ Thus the report founds itself upon the notions of church belonging and working only in and through community. The church is thus not a distinct community but rather a part of that community. The report however will not give us a neat model to fit all situations, rather it recognises that under certain guiding principles the church will take shape in a distinct form within each community uniquely. The blueprint for success, if it is indeed present, will thus be of a more subtle form.

The church structure under which this reform would take place must become more flexible, driven from the needs of the local situation. The report recommends greater financial support for local church initiatives, which attempt to make greater

³⁹⁵ *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, The Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2001. p36/8.

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

contact with the un-churched in their communities, through the establishment of a Community and Parish Development Fund. Thus, the report is recommending that the church put its money where its mouth is, in a substantial manner. This is an important concept, for as we have seen with the example of St. Francis in the East and Church House, if it had not been for the generous benefactors who had supported the building projects for the Bridgeton church community, (which then gave them the facilities that brought contact with the local un-churched community) growth in the church would not have been achieved. The report recommends £1.5 million being put into the project over a five year period which should support and develop 50 multi-skilled team ministry projects or initiatives! Thus, does the old system of wealthy church patronage to poor inner city churches, get replaced in our new millennium with a substantial Community and Parish Development Fund. So far so good. This report seems to support what it says with substantial funds. It is also in agreement with this thesis when it argues for church growth, only out of and through community. But when we speak of community today, we have suggested in this work that post modern society is no longer best represented by denominational groupings. What then does "Church Without Walls", have to say on such matters?

In its first section entitled, 'Primary Calling of the Church', the report reveals its ecumenical roots. It states " 'Follow me'. These two words of Jesus Christ offer us the purpose, shape and process of continuous reform of the Church

at the beginning of a new Millennium and at any other time. The Commission has joked about making these two words the report to the General Assembly. The Church of Jesus Christ is about nothing more and nothing less than this. Like a computer icon the words 'Follow me' carry within them the complex and comprehensive processes of being God's people in God's world. That core calling takes us back behind the secondary identities of denomination or tradition and calls us to turn again to be people with Jesus at the centre, travelling wherever Jesus takes us. It is so simple we cannot miss it. It is so profound we can never exhaust it. This calling invites us to risk the way of Jesus." ³⁹⁷

The report thus recognises that within each and every community in the country the call to be a Christian overarches all denominational groupings and this is at the heart of the Christian community ecumenical relationship. It is quite simply about a love of Jesus and a will to follow him. This calling, the report claims, will impact on the individual in community, impact on the Christian and wider local community, and because its focus is *from below*, (as Bonhoeffer would say) it is relational rather than institutional. Such a calling thus calls people out of the familiar to the new environment which makes this path to *follow me* both sacrificial and radical. The report states, "...the mission for Christ creates his own church". ³⁹⁸ The church is thus not the end in

³⁹⁷ *ibid* p36/9.

³⁹⁸ *ibid* p36/10.

itself but rather the pointer to the future kingdom and a witness to its continued revelation, as it breaks through in the here and now. The report argues that it is thus eschatological in imperative.

What, then, has changed for the church? The report recognises that the church is no longer the great institution of the masses wherein membership equates to salvation. For two reasons the report holds to this view. Firstly, the church no longer statistically contains the vast majority of people in society as members. The report states, "According to J.L. Secundo, 'it is the situation of Christendom that represents a distortion, or at least an abnormal condition, in the church's role in history. The normal condition and the one that is coming back into focus today is that of a creative minority dedicated to the service of the vast majority.'" Dietrich Bonhoeffer could not have said it any better!

Secondly, the report's ecclesiology is reformed in outlook. Calvin's thoughts on the nature of the church itself come through strongly here. Ecumenical at heart, the concept is based around the Pauline conception of the Church as the body of Christ of which He is the head, soul and life itself. The Church is a creation of Christ through His Holy Spirit which makes up one body taking different shapes. To be in Christ means to be in the body which is the Church. The theology of church, within 'Church Without Walls' is led by reformed ecclesiology. The *visible church*, as Zwingli first coined the

phrase, was the body or institutions in all their forms, the elect however belonged to those of Christ's body and were the *invisible church*. Calvin's theology held to the view that all denominational church groupings, held within them members of Christ's invisible church. Thus Calvin worked throughout his life for unity within the church, namely, one protestant denomination, which would proceed to full relationship with Rome through a church council. How would Calvin have liked this unified church to be?

Hunter writes, "If it be asked what exactly was the ideal of union at which Calvin aimed, it would be easier to say what it was not than what it was...He recognised that anything of the nature of a compulsory uniformity was unrealisable, and any attempt to procure it would only accentuate differences, inflame antagonisms, and widen such breaches as existed. Nothing more was practicable amidst the inevitably divergent views of Scripture truth and teaching and in face of inherited prepossessions and sympathies than a union of bodies of Christians professing the same fundamental doctrines. It would be characterised not by complete confessional identity in detail, but by a common centrality of faith and a spiritual unity. It would leave room for denominational variety, arising from ecclesiastical predilections or temperamental preferences for allowable ritual. If a form of episcopacy was germane to the Polish or English cast of mind, Presbyterianism should not be imposed. If a liturgy was desired by a body

of worshipping Christians, let them be provided with a suitable and reliable one. He recognised that it would be fatal to demand a change in the German character of the Lutheran Reformation, or to exact that it should don Swiss garments."³⁹⁹

'Church Without Walls', states "The Church of Scotland must take her place alongside other churches in being a representative of the Christian faith among the Scottish people. The context is now overtly missionary with the collapse of the Christendom canopy. Pastoral presence, creative communication, and patient persuasion require a more proactive role for the Church of Scotland in the 21st century." What the report is thus advocating, at its heart, is an outlook of ministry similar to that of any denominational, ecumenical chaplaincy, currently in the Royal Navy, working through team ministries serving geographical areas. What the report recognises is that people live in geographical areas but exist in communities within that geography. It is thus to these individual communities with which the team ministries must make contact with, in a similar way to a Chaplain belonging to a wider naval community but specifically belonging to an individual ship's company. It is the nature of the chaplain's relationship to the ship's company which is most important and rewarding in terms of mission as we have noted in chapter four.

³⁹⁹ A. Mitchell Hunter. *The Teaching of Calvin*. James Clarke & Co Ltd. 1950. p164.

So 'Church Without Walls' recognises such thoughts for the new style *matrix ministries* within a broader ecumenical setting as advocated by Calvin. Thus the report maintains a parish structure for the Church of Scotland to the whole nation, and indeed this gives a guarantee to the nation that there will be a church in every corner of the land. However, the mission of the church will be directed to the individual community groupings within that geographical context which in itself does not stand for community.

Where Calvin's hand most strongly comes through are in these words, "If we were to restate the purpose of the Church of Scotland in our context, it might include: As part of the world Church, we are committed to the spiritual welfare of the whole Scottish nation and to share in God's mission across the world. Along with other branches of Christ's Church, we seek humbly to represent the Christian Faith among the Scottish people. Together, we acknowledge our distinctive call and duty to bring the Christian Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in every part of Scotland. We recognise the call, through a shared ministry of pastoral and prophetic evangelism, to serve people in all the communities and sectors of their lives." ⁴⁰⁰ Calvin's vision then of one Church as one body, with different parts in different places, still stands strong in the theology of ecumenism and mission for the Church of Scotland within 'Church Without Walls'.

⁴⁰⁰ *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, The Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2001, p36/13.

I.5 A New Shape?

The above thoughts on ecumenism bring us to ask the question of what shape this new church might take? As mentioned earlier the form itself will be driven by the local situation. The dynamism produced in the local area will then be supported at both a broader Presbytery and General Assembly level, somewhat turning upside down the perceived structure and hierarchy of the current church set up, as far as the report is concerned. This empowering of the local situation, to be part of the change itself, will inherently involve more people at a local level, taking on increased responsibilities.

The local shape of the church will be guided on the principle of being like Jesus. The report states, "It is about the lives of individuals and congregations being shaped in the 'mind of Christ'." ⁴⁰¹ The report recommends each church following the story of a Gospel throughout a church year and listening for God's guidance on how that church could become Gospel orientated through change. A living spirituality of grace will thus emerge, overflowing into all relationships in the local church community. The report speaks of a healthy lifestyle, where human development is fully embraced through this cycle of grace, in a way similar to MacLeod's words on 'healthiness' noted in chapter one. The thoughts of a living spirituality closely mimics Bonhoeffer's call for the maintenance of the spiritual disciplines.

⁴⁰¹ *ibid* p36/17.

Within all of this however, the parish structure survives. For like Levack, the report sees an inherent quality in a church in every parish. However, and where the report improves on Levack's thesis, it recommends where appropriate, that team ministries replace the old system of one parish, one Minister. The team ministries would be appointed to tackle the problem of bringing the Gospel to the network of communities which exist within a complex parish (*matrix*) structure. These team ministries will enable specialised ministries to develop for each distinct community situation, very similar to existing and varied, chaplaincy team ministries.

The style of worship will be driven by the needs of the local situation, where the post modern individual will choose worship, as a form of leisure activity at the earlier stages of commitment to the church. This would be in direct competition with shopping, sporting events or any other form of leisure activity. The principle of friendship between team members and the local churches is key to the principle of change for the millennium. No more can the churches be seen to be competing with one another in an unseemly manner. As the ministry teams move out beyond the existing institutional church walls into this new church structure they must be empowered within their own team spiritually by a strong discipline, maintained through regular retreat and study times. Leadership of these team ministries is vital at

every level of organisation, within 'Church Without Walls', from the new team leader Minister role to the Superintendent Presbyterian Minister. A new form of Eldership will arise, where the specific gifts and talents within the Kirk Session are better deployed into areas of need and the church breaks from the mould of one Elder, one district. The time of the multi functional Minister and Elder is thus over for the report.

Presbytery will be reformed as a forum for support of the local church and not be seen as a potential source of conflict. It would encourage the formation of local area groupings (which will replace a number of the smaller Presbyteries) across denominations. There will be a smaller number of Presbyteries themselves, led by Superintendent Ministers over an extended period of time, and the new Presbyteries will form up along the lines and numbers of the old Synodical boundaries, administered by a full time office, with staff and facilities in place, to better support the local area church groups. Within the Synodical area there will be a *Presbyterial Cathedral*, centres of excellence to encourage and inspire the local churches. The report states, "In Scotland, there are many who would see Iona Abbey as a similar example of inspiration for over 60 years. We believe that there are churches around Scotland where that same inspirational leadership might be offered to others." ⁴⁰²

⁴⁰² *ibid* 36/32.

Above all else however, and if the report is to be taken seriously enough to actually bring in change, two things in this report have to happen. Firstly, the grass roots of the Church of Scotland must agree with the report when it states, "Have we been using our great united forces for the winning of Scotland? The Church is not infiltrating through the Community as it can and as it ought...We are all to blame. Too many of our good respectable Church folks still think of their own church as if it were a private religious club. They miss the main function of Church life and worship-to go out to their brothers and sisters and compel them to come in." ⁴⁰³

Secondly, and if the grass roots agree with the above statement, the report states that, "The heart of reform is the reform of the heart. The first proposal for a reform is a call to prayer." ⁴⁰⁴ It is on that note that we turn to our thoughts on an arcane form of discipline for today.

II. THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

II.1 A Form of Arcane Discipline for Today

Bonhoeffer's interest in the *arcane discipline* stems from his desire to have a fundamentally changed world. We have noted in our own stocktaking of Christianity in this work⁴⁰⁵ that from the trenches on the Somme to HMS OCEAN, many, many un-

⁴⁰³ *ibid* 36/44.

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid* 36/37.

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter One - World War I critique p2-39 and HMS OCEAN study p308ff.

churched people respond to the figure of Christ, if not always the church. Bonhoeffer's statement holds true then, when he says that the world can only be changed when the question, "Who is Christ for us today?" ⁴⁰⁶ is answered both personally and as a church. Indeed, this is the driving force as we have just seen behind 'Church Without Walls'. How then are we both personally and collectively to discover this *Christ for today*?

Bethge writes, "The discipline of prayer, meditation, worship and coming together (in 'genuine worship') is as essential-though of course, reformable -as daily food and drink. But it is also as much an 'arcane' affair as the central events of life, which are not amenable to a missionary demonstration. The degree to which-and the centre from which-those who interpret Christianity in a non-religious way are maintained, led on and 'spiritually nourished', cannot be outwardly propagated or demonstrated...the arcane discipline acquires the important function of protecting the non-religious interpretation of Christianity from relapsing into religion."⁴⁰⁷ To act in a *non-religious* way, necessarily suggests the preservation and discipline of maintaining an arcane discipline to re-present Christ for today. To know who Christ is for us we must thus maintain both a personal and spiritual discipline of private and collective worship. Out of this discipline will the people of God represent Him to the world. These are the notions within 'Church Without Walls',

⁴⁰⁶ Bethge E, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, SCM Press Ltd. 1969. p784.

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid* p785.

concerning Gospel centred change in the local area churches.

Such thoughts are backed up by Bishop John Robinson when he states, "Unless the Church has the 'secret discipline' of which Bonhoeffer spoke as the presupposition of all his 'worldly Christianity', unless the Christian's 'life is hid with Christ in God', then any distinction between being in the world but not of it disappears, and at once he is down one side of the 'knife-edge'. There must be what Jacques Ellul, the layman, puts it, 'the whole life is concerned' in it. 'It includes the way we think about present political questions as well as our way of practising hospitality'." ⁴⁰⁸ The link between prayer life, personal and communal spirituality and action is thus intertwined.

Robinson, when considering *worldly holiness* says, "My own experience is that I am really praying for people, agonizing with God for them, precisely as I meet them and really give my soul to them. It is then if ever, in this incarnational relationship, that deep speaks to deep and the Spirit of God is able to take up our inarticulate groans and turn them into prayer. It is *afterwards* that I find one needs to withdraw-as it were, to clarify on tablets and bring to obedience the revelation given on the mount.

Perhaps this is the starting point for a *non-religious*

⁴⁰⁸ Robinson JAT, *Honest to God*, SCM Press Ltd. 1963. p136.

understanding of prayer. We may begin from the fact that people do give themselves to people. There is nothing 'religious' about this. But to open oneself to another *unconditionally* in love *is* to be with him in the presence of God, and that is the heart of intercession. To pray for another is to expose both oneself and him to the common ground of our being; it is to see one's concern for him in terms of *ultimate* concern, to let *God* into the relationship. Intercession is to be *with* another at that depth, whether in silence or compassion or action...Prayer is the responsibility to meet others with *all* I have, to be ready to encounter the unconditional in the conditional, to expect to meet God in the way, not to turn aside from the way." ⁴⁰⁹

This is what Studdert Kennedy meant when he described what being a Chaplain was all about saying, "Take a box of fags in your haversack, and a great deal of love in your heart, and go with them, live with them, talk with them. You can pray with them sometimes, but pray *FOR* them always." ⁴¹⁰ The ability to be there underpins the prayer itself. Without the presence the prayer itself is altered. This of course was Robinson's point. It is one of the greatest advantages Naval chaplaincy especially offers, to be truly there and this is a spiritual gift which has practical results. It is what Taylor most emphasised in his history of Naval chaplaincy, the fact of

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid* p99.

⁴¹⁰ Grundy M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*, Osborne Heritage Books Ltd. 1997. p56.

shared, communal ship's experiences of which the Chaplain was necessarily a part. He had nowhere else to go. It is the aim of 'Church Without Walls', to deliver the church to the heart of the community. All of these situations are underpinned for success however, as we have noted in the writings of Kennedy, Bonhoeffer and MacLeod, by a disciplined spiritual life amongst Christians both individually and communally (ordained or lay). It is this discipline of prayer and worship which underpinned the life of the small Christian community on HMS OCEAN, in Kosovo and in Afghanistan and enabled the message to be taken out in a non religious way (understandable manner), avoiding profanation (making our message up to make things easier for ourselves), to the un-churched ship's or commando community. This I believe was the main girder of any success which we achieved. We could then move out as Chaplains and tackle the problems around us. It is a lesson brought to us in the civilian environment by the early Iona Community when training and supporting its young Ministers in the Church Extension charges.

When I started the new chaplaincy centre on board HMS OCEAN I was asked by command why I wanted to be informed about every pastoral case on the ship. It was not necessarily my business, I was told, to interfere in the Divisional System, wherein Divisional Officers interviewed, cared for and ensured the well-being of their division. My response, having read Studdert Kennedy, Bonhoeffer and MacLeod, added to a few years of operational experience was to say, "I need to be told so

that I can pray for them and the situation that they are in!" The answer was "Fair enough Padre, I'll make sure you are informed." (I'm not sure the man had the slightest idea about what I was talking about at the time, although the religious jargon seemed to humble him a bit!) The point of this story is not simply to highlight the Padre's ministry of prayer, but to connect this ministry, to a ministry of presence. By being informed of someone's plight, the chaplaincy team would not only pray for them, but with them and offer every pastoral aid we could find. This often resulted in our recommending to the Captain a pastoral action, on a given situation, which the Divisional Officer would simply not have considered. The Padre thus became the Pastoral or Welfare Officer for the ship, an outward and worthwhile position in the eyes of the ship's company. This was achieved and practically underpinned by the ministry of prayer to the ship, which in turn was wrapped up in the team's maintenance of our own spiritual discipline.⁴¹¹ An incarnational and thus representational ministry, intertwines and becomes at the centre of the ship's activities. Christ, through the Chaplain, visibly becomes placed at the centre of military community life.

Because of the close pastoral connection to the ship's company for the Padre, these prayers became *informed* prayers of intercession. It is what George MacLeod described as prayers to the God of the *here and now*. He writes, "Here is the

⁴¹¹ This of course was a lesson learnt by the Padres during the First World War, that is, to succeed in a very difficult environment one must first keep one's spiritual discipline.

substantial offer to meet our so substantially material modern world. How marvellous is the power available to those who believe in God! God is Here. It is as necessary to recover our sense of God as Now...But it is the essence of the evangelistic offer that there are no longer two ways about it. Once more if the modern Christian, if he is to deal with the burden of the now, must accept the offer of God's Now: His presence in the world...The only way to achieve a sense of God's presence is to put yourself in the way of Him." ⁴¹² That of course is what we were asking for when first establishing the chaplaincy centre and it is what 'Church Without Walls', asks of the Church of Scotland.

Interestingly, Sunday worship at sea necessarily developed greater significance, following a stronger and perhaps more useful involvement of chaplaincy during the working week. Our daily prayers which followed the highs and lows of the community life at sea, would then be wrapped up in the reality (pastoral) of existence on a Sunday morning when the ship's worshipping community gathered and prayed for those in need. There was and still is no requirement to name names of those suffering in a ship's company, people naturally know the needs of others in this small community. Thus, are the weekly prayers for those in need picked up amongst prayers for shared separation from loved ones and dangers to be faced. The key was and is shared prayer through shared life circumstances.

⁴¹² MacLeod G, *Only One Way Left*, The Iona Community. 1958. p156.

This naturally effects the dynamics of worship giving it *realness* and *substance*. It thus makes sense to even the most cynical of Naval men to speak to the Padre about problems amongst the men. Foster writes, "It is actually possible today for people to go to church services week in week out for years without having a single experience of spiritual examen. What a tragedy! What a loss! No wonder today people are weak. No wonder they are barely hanging on. To offer something that is real and touches people gains not surprisingly an astonishing response. We must therefore concentrate our efforts upon achieving these aims. But snares lie in wait." ⁴¹³

What snares? Where we must be careful when considering this new form of worshipping community at sea (which arises from the form of wider community at sea in contrast to the communities in Britain at large), is not to impose structures of civilian church organization upon the new situation. This includes necessarily the liturgy used. Imagination is required to make sure the liturgy is carefully selected for the good of those worshipping and not for the good of those leading worship. Those who gather to experience, what Foster calls the *spiritual examen*, where the soul meets its maker, will return time and again, if they do experience that *examen* of the soul. Often the mistake made by a Chaplain is to remain so closely tied to his upbringing and training that he

⁴¹³ Foster RJ, *Prayer; Finding the heart's true home*. Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. 1992. p27

cannot see the needs of others. In this instance we must remember the statistics from the HMS OCEAN study and the general indifference towards denominationalism amongst the group, in terms of liturgical preference. We must take the risk, as Bonhoeffer says, and become open minded to new forms of worship if necessary. Davie's analysis of people in a post modern society, seeking leisure outlets within their lifestyle must be a consideration for the type of liturgy the church offers. The key being that the spiritual *examen* which Foster holds up, must be contained in that worship. To find our answers we in the church must have an honest debate, unhindered by politic and envy. This is perhaps our greatest challenge and was the blocking point for any change, certainly within the Church of England following the First World War. It may indeed become one of the blocking points for the new team ministries in a 'Church Without Walls'.

Bishop Robinson himself falls into this trap and moves away from Bonhoeffer's plea for an honest debate when he thinks through possible implications of his own thought process for the Church of England. He writes, "With regard to my own Church of England, I find myself in wide measure of agreement with both the hopes and the fears expressed by Dr. Vidler. Anything that helps to keep its frontiers open to the world as the Church of the nation should be strengthened and reformed: anything that turns it in upon itself as a religious organization or episcopalian sect I suspect and deplore. For the true radical is not the man who wants to root out the

tares from the wheat so as to make the Church perfect: it is only too easy on these lines to reform the Church into a walled garden. The true radical is the man who continually subjects the Church to the judgement of the Kingdom, to the claims of God in the increasingly non-religious world which the Church exists to serve." ⁴¹⁴

Bishop Robinson is speaking here clearly as a Bishop of the Church of England. Because of this his words are not radical enough to fit into Bonhoeffer's thought as mentioned above. Indeed, having examined the figures from both studies previously mentioned, we must understand the situation beyond both the modern and secular world of Bonhoeffer and Robinson and think in terms of post modern individuals, ethnic and demographic groupings, community and non denominationalism. Where Bonhoeffer's thesis holds firm, is that the way forward for the church must be based upon a church which maintains its discipline and thus discernment of God's will in an open, honest debate. There can be no further conditions, a point strongly made in 'Church Without Walls'. Anything that strengthens the Church of England or Church of Scotland as the Church of the nation may not necessarily be good. Indeed at the moment the Church of England's claim to be the church of the nation stands on sandy ground with less than one million at church on a Sunday. But that is not the point. Having worked on the front line with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, I have learnt that when we speak of the church we

⁴¹⁴ Robinson JAT, *Honest to God*, SCM Press Ltd. 1963. p139.

must begin to think non-denominationally, focussing in on those who are also not attending the civilian, denominational structures, as well as those who are.

But the debate must be theological as well as structural. Bonhoeffer writes, "What do we really believe? I mean, believe in such a way that we stake our lives on it? The problem of the Apostles' Creed? 'What *must* I believe?' is the wrong question; antiquated controversies, especially those between the different sects; the Lutheran versus Reformed, and to some extent the Roman Catholic versus Protestant, are now unreal. They may at any time be revived with passion, but they no longer carry any conviction."⁴¹⁵ Here Bonhoeffer's thesis that religion (as I have argued, is man made and thus denominational), must be replaced with a Christian church which serves the needs of others and not its own institutional requirements, must come in. It must be a servant or worthwhile church in the world's eyes, for the good of the conscience of its members. This returns us to the recommendations of the First World War Padres as noted in the first chapter. We will return to the shape or structure of this proposed non-religious church later, what we can say is that it will have at its centre a spiritual discipline to maintain its centredness within the Christian faith, to further allow its structure (in terms of denominationalism), to move out into a new form.

⁴¹⁵ Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, SCM Press Ltd. 1986. p138.

II.2 A Theology of the Cross

Our stocktaking of Christianity so far has revealed a post modern person who is not un-attracted by Christ and His church, provided the message contains a spiritual vitality which both feeds and engages with life. Such engagement we noted in a practical sense with the chaplaincy team on HMS OCEAN. A worthwhileness was given to our work both in practical and spiritual problem solving on board and thus satisfied with our contribution, the Navy was happy to continue to finance the department (always a good sign that your work is appreciated). All of this work was however underpinned individually and collectively (across denominations) by the maintenance of spiritual disciplines within the small Christian community, which helped the team survive and flourish in a non religious environment. We have noted however that both Bonhoeffer, Kennedy and MacLeod believed that this alone is not enough to take Christianity to the un-churched person today, in order that they might learn who Christ is for them. Alongside the maintenance of a spiritual discipline, we have noted that they argued that it was necessary to have a new theology of ministry underpinning all works.

Jürgen Moltmann wrote these words which best explain why we need to recover today a theology of the cross, which for Kennedy, Bonhoeffer and MacLeod is the theology of ministry for today. He writes, "The struggle for a renewal of theology

and the churches began with the realization, which has become widespread and irrefutable, that Christianity faced a growing crisis of relevance and credibility." ⁴¹⁶ We have noted that this crisis of relevance and identity is not a new phenomenon. In studying the life, works and writings of Studdert Kennedy during the Great War years and its aftermath, we learnt of Kennedy's and his fellow chaplains convictions that only a theology of the cross would be listened to by the men. It would however only be given a hearing from the masses if it was expounded by someone to whom the theology preached matched the life lived and where shared circumstances prevailed. As Captain Dunn⁴¹⁷ reminded us in his history of the infantry during the Great War, the Padre for the men seems to be a man whom they like when he is doing something they view as valuable. We noted Brown's⁴¹⁸ observation that the most successful chaplains were those who served the men by enduring their suffering and then helping them, at the front, in every kind of human way possible. The Padres understood this and so called for a new form of theological language and ecclesiastical structure.

Thus, twenty five years before Bonhoeffer had even dreamt of a *non-religious language*, Alexander Irving,⁴¹⁹ in 1918, was speaking of the religious language of his time, as being a second hand garment which was unintelligible to the masses.

⁴¹⁶ Moltmann J, *The Crucified God*, SCM Press Ltd. 1989. p8.

⁴¹⁷ See Dunn JC, *The War the Infantry Knew 1914 - 1919*, Sphere Books Ltd. 1991. p16.

⁴¹⁸ See p30.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid* p32.

He wrote that Padres had to distinguish themselves in the area of the intellect of the soul (we especially note here both Bonhoeffer's and Foster's previous interest in the maintenance of a spiritual discipline, when working within an un-churched environment). The First World War showed us that it was all too easy for Padres to lose their faith in this atmosphere.

Bonhoeffer's call for *honest reflection*, similarly follows the cries of the Padres' thoughts following the First War. The example of Charles Raven, surrounded by the untold violence, destruction and tragedy of war, led him to be critical of a language which emphasised God's omnipotence. This language spoke of a God who was just and all powerful, who therefore allowed the tragedy of the war to happen through inaction. It was rejected by *Tommy*. A language needed to be found which spoke of the soldier's sacrifice, achieving a form of *at one ment* in and through a shared suffering with Jesus. An understandable language to Tommy which spoke of a *theologia crucis* and not a *theologia gloriae*. For without the cross there could be no glory, without the cross, the sacrifice of the men during the war, could not be understood theologically, and still allow for the belief in a loving God. Thus, from within this theology of the cross, would worth be given to the tragedy of the war and *Tommy* could better understand the relevance of God and His ultimate glory for them. The Christian faith would become once more rooted into a reality. Within this theology, the sacrament of the *Washing of Feet* would need to be emphasised.

This theology must also take shape through the service of the church as the servant of the world. Thus T.F. Torrance writes, "The form which this re-ordering (of the church) in Jesus Christ takes is the form of the Servant. It was through His obedience within our disobedient humanity that He restored us to order and peace in God...Thus as Jesus was obedient in the Father, who sent Him to fulfil His Will, so the Church is ordered in its obedience to Christ who sent it to fulfil His Will. The obedience of the Church to Christ is not simply an imitation of His obedience but a fulfilling of God's Will through participation in Christ's obedience."⁴²⁰ We as Christians are thus called by God to participate in Christ's sufferings for the world in obedience to God's Will. This is the practical result of a genuine belief in a theology of the cross which speaks of participation in the sufferings of the world with Christ.

Neville Talbot, long before Bonhoeffer spoke of the separateness of the ordained ministry, advocated the abolition of the full time ministry and suggested that the clergy should be forced to earn their own livings. Why? Because, he believed that it would be here, working amongst the people, that clergy would learn to speak in the so-called *Kingdom Vernacular* or *non religiously*, as Bonhoeffer would say. The church, Talbot argued was still using a language of a different time. It could thus no longer speak to the masses

⁴²⁰ Torrance T, *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray Anderson, T&T Clark Ltd. 1979. p393.

in a helpful way, it could not be understood. This was why Bonhoeffer called for silence from the church in speaking to the masses until it had worked out how to properly speak to them. Enough harm he told us had already been done by the church through speaking and being misunderstood by the people. The method of learning such a language was one of being in community with those to whom you speak. The language would thus vary from community to community and yet convey the same truths of the gospel.

An example of this is noted by Davie when she quotes the example of a hospital Chaplain working in both a gynaecological and maternity hospital. The greatest difference between the two groupings was age. Both groups of patients welcomed the Chaplain, the difference was that with the older group of patients there was a church background and thus there was a common vocabulary between Chaplain and patients. With the younger group, the Chaplain felt that initially she was unable to communicate with her patients because there was no shared language. Worship and pastoral care thus had to be re-learnt to re-present the same message to the younger patients. Davie writes, "Ministry was not necessarily more difficult among the younger women - particularly those emerging from the experience of giving birth - but it had to be approached in a different way. New formulas had to be found for articulating the sacred, for there was nothing to fall back on in this generation of women,

born for the most part since 1960." ⁴²¹

In the report, *The Church in the Furnace*, FR Barry highlights the experience of the hospital Chaplain in a more profound way. He says, "...war unmasks the trivialities in religion; it impels one to take 'the devil' seriously, it sweeps away false ideas of divine omnipotence conceived of as Olympian and passionless: Our God in His manward aspect...is a Being who is limited and striving..." ⁴²²

Studdert Kennedy put meat onto the notion of the language of the *Kingdom vernacular* through his dialect poetry. This poetry expressed a *theology of the cross* in the language of the masses. That was why in his day he was a best seller. He wrote in the vernacular because it was a shared language with the un-churched. So Purcell wrote, "...Geoffrey's dialect verses would scarcely have meant much to the more sophisticated soldiery of the second war. But the men he had in mind and heart were of a very different sort, for the most part the simple working-men...The dialect he used was truly of their very being. Not surprisingly, the *Rough Rhymes* swept through the armies in France and the peoples at home like a fire; burning some; warming many." ⁴²³ His theological ideas, which were originally contained in his poetry, resulted in the book *The Hardest Part*. The two themes that emerged were a renewal of *genuine prayer life* and *sacramentalism*. Once more,

⁴²¹ Davie G, *Religion in Britain since 1945*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1997. p124.

⁴²² Purcell W, *Woodbine Willie*, Hodder & Stoughton. 1962. p48.

⁴²³ *ibid* p83.

Bonhoeffer has been anticipated in his thinking. The *theology of the cross* (*only the suffering God can help* - Bonhoeffer), is fundamental to Kennedy's understanding. Studdert Kennedy wrote that God deals with sin by the way of sacrifice and love. By the action of suffering and a cross. That is how He deals with man's countless inhumanities to man. He takes it upon himself. He bears the burden and calls us to share in that burden.

This changes the way in which we pray. Foster argues that to start off in our prayerful relationship with God we pray largely about problems which trouble ourselves. However, as we mature in the faith we are directed beyond such thoughts. The prayers are not then about our needs but rather about the fulfilment of God's will. They are *Gethsemane* driven. Those who maintain this discipline of prayer, live out a theology of the cross. By praying in this manner they communicate with the suffering and triumphant God and He pours out His Spirit upon them to fight, suffer and conquer in the end. Kennedy's crucifix with Christ's head held high in victory represents artistically this theology of the cross.

The paradox of such a *theology of the cross* was not lost on Kennedy anymore than it was lost on Bonhoeffer. The cross becomes the triumph. Here God does appear as weak and defeated, but hope is offered in and through the defeat. Noticeably, the connector for Kennedy and Bonhoeffer is that the theology of the cross emerged from the most harrowing

pastoral situations imaginable. Gone were the fineries of chapel and gathered community, enter rather, the apocalypse of the Somme and the Third Reich. With previous church structures and theologies impotent against these forces of evil ranging against them, the *old wine skins* burst. Both men returned to a renewal of spiritual discipline and a theology of the cross, which Kennedy emphasised through the practice of the Eucharist's central message. It was not, however, the end in itself, rather the beginning. We hope then, as Christians, because behind the crucifix stands an empty tomb and this is ultimately when all of the 'organization' of life is brushed away and shown for what it is.

The theology of the cross is expounded biblically in St. Paul's teaching on the significance of the resurrection. For the early Christians, an important thought on the resurrection of Jesus was that, unlike their Jewish counterparts, the resurrection of the dead was not of a purely future entity. For St. Paul, Christians already share in an important sense the risen life of Christ. In Galatians 2, 19-20 he writes, "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (RSV) So, in Christ's death, for St. Paul, Christ left behind the old realm of sin, death and the law and entered a new realm of life in God's presence. The Christian thus shares in this new life in Christ, but only

partially whilst on earth. St. Paul is strongly opposed to the idea that Christians share fully in the risen life of Christ whilst on earth, and indeed he attacks those in the Corinthian church who take this view. He writes, in 1 Corinthians 4.8, "Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!" (RSV)

There then follows a description by St. Paul of all his and the apostles' sufferings which are a sign that life in the resurrection has not arrived as yet in all its fullness. Watson thus writes, "The character of the present age (for St. Paul) is determined neither by Jesus' crucifixion alone (which would make the resurrection purely future), nor by his resurrection alone (which would make the resurrection purely present), but by both together; the new age is present only in a paradoxical manner while the old continues." ⁴²⁴ Christ's absence is not complete, for in the gift of the Spirit he is already present. The Last Supper discourses in John 13-17 uphold this exegesis. Christ is, from 1 Corinthians 15.20, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (RSV) and his resurrection is seen by St. Paul as the guarantee of a final resurrection.

What is important as regards our theology of a cross, is that it ties into a maintenance of spiritual discipline, that

⁴²⁴ See Watson F, *A Guide to the New Testament*, BT Batsford Ltd. 1987. p134.

Christ may live within us, as St. Paul noted. But also part of that discipline was to be fools for Christ, just as Studdert Kennedy described himself. We must therefore exist as Christians in a worldly environment which may mock us. The theology behind our exegesis is that suffering can and does occur in our current times, and Christ remains upon his cross and yet he is raised. He remains crucified, as we ourselves remain crucified through the sufferings of this life, and yet it is through his very resurrection power in the Spirit, that here and now Christ raises our heads up to see him and to empower us. Thus he reveals to us the future we are promised.

This is Studdert Kennedy's crucifix crafted on the fields of the Somme, still crucified and yet with head held high in victory, or Bonhoeffer's weak and powerless God, who is the only God that can help. For this God, through His sufferings, continues to be at the centre of all of mankind's existence through His Spirit and in the lives of Christians. Such is a worthwhile and eternally working *at one ment* with mankind, by and through the cross, borne for us by a God identifying with His children completely, even unto death. This is the God of *Tommy*, Christ in the trenches. The triumph is thus of a suffering God, who is love, and revealed Himself to mankind through the seemingly tragic cross. Hence for Bonhoeffer, only the suffering God can help, for the only God that exists for him is the One who suffers. The same was true for Kennedy and the troops for it was only this God who made sense. The paradox of the theology of the cross is that God's power is

His love which is most manifestly revealed by the so-called weakness of crucifixion.

For many during the Great War, to meet Christ and to know who He was for them (to answer the original question of Bonhoeffer), was achieved through the ministrations of the Padres in the trenches who preached a theology of the cross, underpinned by a spiritual discipline, which gave them the power to practise what they preached. These Padres brought a model of ministry, both ecclesiastically and theologically, back to the church at home, but it would not listen. The problem was that this church was not only behind the times as an institution (ecumenically) but it had a theology of triumph, privilege and status which ordinary people rejected. The Great War put many people off the church for good. Bonhoeffer picked up on this for these people he called secular, and he too would emphasise a theology of the cross and spiritual discipline to bring people back into relationship with God in Christ. Fifty years later our stocktaking of the state of Christianity in Britain and the Royal Navy has shown that the church has not learnt from Kennedy and Bonhoeffer. She must reform, in terms of spiritual discipline of members, theological belief (what really matters as Bonhoeffer put it) and through structural change. It was to address these matters that 'Church Without Walls' was written, but is it enough?

III. CONCLUSION: MINISTRY FOR TODAY

In this section I will argue that the church needs a broader and more radical vision, both theologically and in structure for a wider mission to the un-churched to work. At its heart, this thesis is about both engagement with those in your community and then conversion through a new theology of the cross, using a shared language. A reformation in both thought and action must take place. This thesis takes seriously the principles for mission, in terms of engagement and theology as shown by Kennedy and Bonhoeffer. The thesis talks of a renewed interest in, and the necessary maintenance of a *spiritual discipline* amongst the clergy. This allows them to remain rooted in the Spirit of the risen Christ and enables them to become Christ like. The sacrament of the washing of the feet (the servanthood of Christ) will thus be remembered from the fields of France. It takes seriously, as regards the Church's mission, a form of ecumenical parish team ministries (shown at St. Francis in the East and advocated by MacLeod and 'Church Without Walls' and present within operational chaplaincy) in order that the Church may be obedient to Christ's call of service.

Engagement, as we have shown, comes through being in community and belonging to it. A Chaplain at sea is the most obvious example for me. In Britain today, denominational church structures still reflect ethnic and cultural backgrounds (as we have seen from Davie's work), and this must be taken into

consideration by the Church when it establishes any new and reformed church structure for mission. Within the Royal Navy, as we have shown, people's backgrounds are largely superseded by the new culture of the Navy and the ship. People are thus already in community and therefore will worship together. In Britain today we see the opposite situation with a fragmentation of community. The Parish Priest or Minister is more likely to be the Priest of several parishes or communities. The situation is thus more difficult for my colleagues working in the civilian parish structure. But to succeed they must be in community with both those who attend their church and those who do not. This thesis points to the fact that many people today do not live in the old parish community, but rather live in what I call a leisure park parish. Here people gather around leisure areas when not at work or school. This is a new form of post modern community.

For the church to engage with these communities, it must offer a chaplaincy to these areas. If it does not do so, the churches will not be able to fully learn that community's language. What's more, they will not be able to speak of the relevance of the theology of the cross in a way that will be understood. The Gospel that truly converts people will thus not be preached (in its broadest sense). The church will then continue to be regarded as largely irrelevant and pushed further out onto the margins of society. A church without walls concept arises, independent of the Church of Scotland report, from our research on chaplaincy. Indeed another name

might be used for 'Church Without Walls', which is Parish Team Chaplaincy. But as we have seen, chaplaincy is much more than simply changed parish boundaries and new team ministries. We have seen that true engagement will only come when the ministry teams are in community with the parishioners and can speak their language. They can only be in community with them when they provide the worthwhile service of answering the question of *who Christ is* for their parishioners, through sacrificial service, revealing a theology of the cross. The church must thus preach Christ and not the church. As we have shown, it must be non religious, thus truly ecumenical (using Bonhoeffer's definition of religion). The attempt within 'Church Without Walls' to be Christ centred is thus supported by this thesis, however there are two notes of caution which we must sound here as regards the report.

The first note comes from Harry Reid in his book 'Outside Verdict, An Old Kirk in a New Scotland.' Reid notes throughout his book how busy all the Ministers he meets are, he also notes their diversity within but one denomination. He writes in the chapter named 'Isolation and Overload', "And, as if all this (overload) is not bad enough, *Without Walls*, while being generally sympathetic to the ministry, wants to add to the general burden by getting ministers to take on the additional big roles of apostle, prophet and evangelist (on top of those of pastor and teacher). I reckon that the ministers are well placed to help with outreach and with a new emphasis on ecumenism; but, given their current workload, they

will need more support than they have received up until now."⁴²⁵ Granted, *Without Walls* suggests a broadening of the role of the readership, deaconate, eldership and overseas bursars to help within a new collaborative ministry, but it is unlikely to be enough when one considers the additional burden on the ministry, when there is a shortage of recruits and ordinands and currently 169 parish vacancies. Whilst Reid supports *Without Walls* in sentiment throughout, advocating better spiritual discipline, team ministries and ecumenism in the new millennium Church of Scotland, the problem shared with Naval Chaplaincy of recruitment and retention of top class Ministers remains at the heart of all the debates on reform in the ministry. It is this problem which needs tackling especially quickly and effectively if any reform is to take place. As MacLeod knew with his team ministry in Govan and as I know from my experiences on HMS OCEAN, with 3 Commando Brigade and as the Corps Chaplain, the team is only as good as its weakest member and this is the limiting factor.

The second note of caution as regards 'Church Without Walls', comes from its thoughts on ecumenical team ministries. Written at a time when the Committee on Ecumenical Relations was submitting its Second Interim Report to the General Assembly in 2000, *Without Walls*, reflects the optimistic approach to ecumenical matters contained within the Scottish Churches' Initiative for Union. Granted, *Without Walls* is a Church of Scotland report and at all times looks at reform of

⁴²⁵ Reid H, *Outside Verdict: An Old Kirk in a New Scotland*, Saint Andrew Press. 2002. p42.

that church, but throughout the report, comment is made on ecumenical initiative and local cooperation between churches, recognising that union may not come about.⁴²⁶ This does not daunt the report in terms of future cooperation between different denominational churches within the local community.

This thesis points to two causes for concern when dealing with this issue. Firstly, we noted from the HMS OCEAN study that fifty per cent of those confirmed Roman Catholics would not attend an ecumenical service at sea. We concluded that this situation arose from an atmosphere that meant the previous century's worth of Anglican dominated sea worship excluded Roman Catholics, many of whom came from Irish Catholic culture. There was thus a national, as well as a church culture, which might prevent them attending services today, despite their inherent ecumenism and welcome. We noted thus that these people have a distinct cultural identity linked to nationality and thus, in a Scottish national context, *Without Walls*, is forced to recognise that there are certain areas of Scottish culture with which a Scottish, National and Presbyterian church may not resonate. *Without Walls* outlook will, as it recognises, be inhibited in certain areas of society where there is a large Roman Catholic community and thus the newly Reformed Church will remain at arm's length from the members of that community. The best it can hope for is a new recognition of the shared love both communities have

⁴²⁶ See *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, The Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2001. p36/25.

for the Lord Jesus Christ and to encourage one another as they serve their distinct communities. Perhaps the greatest aim in this direction is towards tolerance and acceptance between both communities.

Ben Quash in his article "The Vocation of Presence and Anglicanism", makes great play of the idea of recognition, which he places as an important tool in overcoming church disharmony within the Anglican faith community. He states, "I want to examine some of the temptations that are around for us to deny or withhold recognition, with all the destructive results that follow. We fail, of course, all the time to give due recognition to others - to allow them to be really present to us as themselves. But we also fail to make ourselves recognizable to them - to show the truth of ourselves in a way that makes us really knowable and genuinely present to them...Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together*, will be an important conversation partner here, because of the magnificent reflection he offers on candid living, on speaking the truth in love, and on openly confessing one's status as a sinner, but then receiving the truth of oneself as a redeemed person as well...Bonhoeffer's profoundest insight of all, here, is that our presence to one another in true community - in this honest mutual recognition - is utterly simultaneous with God's presence to us. God's presence to us enables us to be open to one another in

community. God empowers us to risk making ourselves knowable and recognizable in the way we need to be, and so to come out of hiding. And, conversely, the genuine community of Christ's people enables the individual to know and recognize God-God's presence. It mediates God. Thus God is made present in the community of truth and love, and in the body of his Church. God's action makes possible true human community, true human community makes possible God's presence." ⁴²⁷

This could not have been better stated in *Without Walls*, in terms of aim, outlook and sentiment! Sadly however the outlook is only within an Anglican context and in fact pleas for recognition of Anglican to Anglican only. This is the nub of the matter for this thesis (in terms of what a *non religious interpretation* is about) and is what *Without Walls* misses, due to the limited scope of its remit. It is limited because the civilian churches are limited in the way they recognise their respective ministries. This is something of course that chaplaincy overcomes at the front in practice but not in name, for we are all sent and are representatives of our sending churches.

Further on in Quash's article, he paraphrases the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan williams saying "The bare question (as he put it) was this: are we really prepared to

⁴²⁷ Quash B, *The Vocation of Presence and Anglicanism*, *Third Millennium* July 2002. Affirming Catholicism. p60.

say that Christians who are united in their affirmation of a single baptism in the threefold name of the Trinity, of the authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine, of the creeds of the undivided Church and of episcopal ministry, are not mutually recognizable to one another as Christians when they differ on matters of sexual ethics? If all these things are shared, are we saying of those whom we disagree on other matters that we are unable to recognise them as fellow Christians? What does it take for someone no longer to be recognizable as a fellow member of the body?" ⁴²⁸

At the heart of the debate in chaplaincy in the Royal Navy when I arrived, and to a lesser extent now, was the question of recognition of the ordination of Church of Scotland and Free Church Ministers by the Church of England chaplains. This lack of recognition, which is still statute in the Anglican communion, surrounds the issue mentioned by the Archbishop, namely episcopal ministry. The Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine in its report to the General Assembly in 2000 noted the dual nature of ordination following Calvin's thoughts on the matter.⁴²⁹ The dual nature of ordination speaks of the divine and human response, to the calling and setting apart of a person as a Minister of Word and Sacrament for the Church of Scotland. The human response is in the action of the church body in selection and nurturing of the individual, in response to the persons perceived call to the ordained

⁴²⁸ *ibid* p64.

⁴²⁹ See, *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, The Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2000. p13/16.

ministry. The call is sustained by the human response of the church body and acted out at the service of ordination itself. The laying on of hands by that church body itself is an action which prays for the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands. The laying on of hands whilst not essential within a Calvinist outlook would be regarded as the apostolically given sign which would witness the presence of the Spirit. As Torrance says, "The laying on of hands cannot be understood therefore as securing or guaranteeing the presence or the operation of the Holy Spirit, but as the apostolically given sign witnessing to the presence of the Spirit, attesting the obedience of the Church to its apostolic origins and binding its continuance, and the continuance of its ministry...it is Christ, not the Apostles, nor the Church who bestows upon the ordained minister the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit...Ordinarily and normatively we are to understand the laying on of hands as the apostolically given sign and instrument to be used by the Spirit in bestowing *charisma* for the ministry." ⁴³⁰

Can Rowan Williams get his Anglican community to recognise the ordination of reformed ministers in Scotland and therefore the validity of their sacrament of Holy Communion? This is the problem today with the Episcopal Church of Scotland and their stance in discussions with the other member churches of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union. Indeed, a major barrier to full union, so far, was the Scottish Episcopal

⁴³⁰ *ibid* p13/20.

Church stance on a form of synodical government through the presence of a Bishop, for the united church. Granted that the role and nature of the Bishop offered was very different to the current situation of Bishop's in the Church of England, but the point is this, insistence that the new Church of Scotland contain the person of a Bishop was not up for debate by the Episcopalians. This point is of course apparent when one realises that the Anglican communion does not recognise the validity of the ordination of Church of Scotland Ministers' as yet. Once recognition is achieved then the debate about the future structure and nature of the church in Scotland can take place, focussing in on the needs of the local community and relevant team ministries, rather than on a church dogma which both offends those not recognised and does not represent genuine concerns of the people within the communities (as recognised by Davie and the HMS OCEAN study). The same challenge must of course be laid at the door of the Roman Catholic Church.

As secular society becomes more and more un-churched less and less will denominational rulings be important to individuals and indeed, the hold some churches have over their communicants will diminish. As people more and more understand themselves as belonging to a non denominational grouping, the model of ecumenical team ministries, throughout the nation, will become a reality. Time will drive this change, but what would be better than that would be if the Christian churches recognised one another's ordained

ministries (Word and Sacrament) before we are embarrassed to do so by the people of God. Any denominational chaplaincy leads the way in many aspects, however we still need to play around with notions of Reserved Sacrament to satisfy church authorities, rather than to serve the needs of our people.

For reform within Naval Chaplaincy, all our appointments should now become any denominational and there should be only one branch for all chaplains. The Church of England, Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland and Free Church Branches, which through their very existence create division amongst the clergy, should be disbanded. The sending churches must realise that their men and women are entering chaplaincy to become Christian Ministers and Priests to the British un-churched. When in that environment, if there are any specific denominational needs, then these will naturally be taken care of by the appropriate Chaplain within the team ministries. As these denominational needs decrease over time, more and more of the Chaplain's work will be dedicated to mission to their communities as advocated by Studdert Kennedy and followed within 'Church Without Walls'. This will not be a chaplaincy aiming to produce a new denomination, or a church within a church, rather it would be based around the new cell church movement where small groups of Christians would gather around the chaplaincy as they walk forward in faith together. We have already seen the growth of this movement within Royal Marines chaplaincy. This is *religionless Christianity*, beyond denominationalism, rooted in community. When back at home

these Christians will choose which civilian church communities they wish to worship within. In this environment will the needs and desires of the post modern service person be fully recognised and a church *Without Walls* may be the most likely place these service people would become associated with.

The question is, have the sending churches the courage to send their chaplains to such a ministry and to finally follow up the recommendations of the First World War chaplains? Do they have the courage, as Bonhoeffer asked, to give up their positions of privilege and status within institutionalised positions and recognise fully the validity of a variety of church orders? It is this debate which will drive the reform within the Royal Navy beyond an ad hoc agreement on the outskirts of ministry within the wider church.

Chapter Six: Towards a Non Religious Interpretation

I. CONCLUSION

As we reach the end of our work, we note that we have followed a path which has been driven from below. In our first chapter we noted my own personal and operational experiences, where there has been a distinct and genuine Christian unity amongst both the chaplaincy teams and those who choose to worship with us. We have noted that culturally we all belong to one company in fact and thoroughly rely upon one another. Our new cultural situation replaced the old denominational ones from whence we came, in fact, if not in denominational detail. We lived together, prayed together and supported one another in the faith. Most importantly we learnt from one another and came to truly know who we all were. It is this recognition which allowed understanding and trust to truly exist. For the non clerics in our community denominational issues were less of a fuss, they assumed this is how the church was meant to be!

As I read the stories of the First World War chaplains and in particular Studdert Kennedy, I realised that what we were all experiencing, within our own chaplaincy situation, was no different to what all Padres' experience in the front line. We learnt the importance of presence, a form of shared suffering, which then allows a shared and learned language to develop, a *Kingdom vernacular* tongue. We noted the significance of this through the numbers of men *Woodbine*

Willie drew to Christ, through his life and his writings. We learnt the importance of the church becoming the servant of the people, the importance of the sacrament of feet washing, of the love of Jesus, but not the institution, by Tommy. We noted the work of Tubby Clayton at Toc H and the example and inspiration for ministry he had on George MacLeod whose whole life's ministry became an answer in itself to bring a Toc H approach to ministry to the civilian church. Thus, did he establish team ministries and train up and support young ministers as they set out on their ministries in the church extension charges.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the words of Norman Shanks, the former Leader of the Iona Community when speaking at the debate of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2001, regarding 'Church Without Walls', when he said nothing in this report recommends anything which is especially new. We know from our research that this is true of 'Church Without Walls'. For back in 1916, Studdert Kennedy gave us a working theology for chaplaincy to the un-churched, his so called *theology of the cross*. This theology, which stressed the incarnation, shared life, suffering and death of God, Kennedy discovered, truly touched men's hearts. It enabled at one moment with their God. It took seriously the current sufferings of mankind and yet held out for a higher hope through the resurrection. This theology was believed by men in large numbers, for it was real to them, for it was brought by men who lived the incarnational priestly role. This is a theology and practice which is needed within our post modern society

where the ordinary man and women simply no longer believe or understand what the church holds to be true. By uniting around Studdert Kennedy's incarnational theology of the cross, we discover an evangelical theology which works for the common man. If the Christian Church is to truly evangelise this world, then a united outlook over the theology of the cross would be one worth stressing and which should have no doctrinal difficulties across the denominations. It does of course require the Ministers and Priests to practice what they preach within their own communities.

In our third chapter we noted the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, shaped largely in and through his conflict with the Nazi regime and the Aryan clause within his own Lutheran church. We have noted that his thoughts from Tegel Prison on *religionless Christianity* arose out of the climate in Germany between 1933-1943. His understanding of the term religion was Barthian, his ecumenical drive discovered in America and continued on through his work with the World Alliance of Churches. It would move on through his work with the Confessing Church and its formation and into his time preparing ordinands at Finkenwalde and Zingst. Finally of course, he was forced out of that church situation into that world he said *had come of age*, and he would work for the downfall of his own government and participate in the plot to assassinate Hitler. This, as we know, would lead to his eventual execution, but not before he left us with his tantalising thoughts on *religionless Christianity* in a world which *had come of age*,

This thesis supports Bonhoeffer's notion that religion is a man made construct which binds the adherent to an organisation. As such this notion of religion does not belong within the pages of the New Testament where Christians are referred to as a people of the way through faith. Christianity is thus a set of beliefs in a person who calls us into a relationship with Him and on to a journey through life inspired by His presence. It is open ended. This open endedness of the Christian faith supersedes denomination, and indeed faith group for Bonhoeffer, when he considers Judaism in light of the *Reichspogromnacht*.

Following the collapse of the Confessing Church and surrounded by a small number of Christians who were secretly continuing the work of the Confessing Church despite persecution, Bonhoeffer comes up with notions of how the church will be following the war. Much smaller, more devout and focussed on what it is, a servant church, free from institutional ties. It had failed to stand up to the challenge of Nazism, this new church would be different. With such thoughts, this new church would be locally based and the Ministers would be provided for from the freewill offerings of the congregation. It would not lord it over society any longer, for society no longer believed in it and it had no right to speak unless it was sure of what it was saying. This would be a penitent church. But out of Bonhoeffer's call for a new, small and devout church, locally based, incarnationally driven, and underpinned by a sacrificial theology, it would arise as a new and truly ecumenical church. The true church of Christ, just

as was hoped for the Confessing Church in 1935. The call to honesty would be a call to ecumenical recognition surrounding the creeds. The call to humility would arise in service.

In chapter four we looked at the development within Naval Chaplaincy of any denominational chaplaincy. We noted how chaplaincy originated out of the civilian Priest embarking with his patron when required. We watched chaplaincy develop as a department within its own right, but being most respected when the Royal Navy was at war. It was then that chaplaincy was most appreciated and found worthwhile. During peace, the Royal Navy would drastically cut chaplaincy numbers to save costs. We noted the difficulty for Naval Chaplains of working in an at times brutal environment at sea and we recorded the bravery of many chaplains serving through the centuries. Most notably, we recorded the words of Albert Hempenstall, for the first time, on his thoughts on chaplaincy following the Falklands War. Chaplaincy needed to be prepared physically and spiritually, for any eventuality, so that God's Word might be brought to his people, even in the midst of battle, he reminded us. We noted the advance of ecumenical team ministries and celebrated the promotion to Chaplain of the Fleet of the Reverend Dr Charles Stewart QHC, as the first ever non Anglican, Director General Naval Chaplaincy Service. Thus, for the first time in Naval Chaplaincy history was there recognised equality of appointing amongst the denominational branches.

In chapter five we drew our thoughts together, examining our

theme of a new model of church, advised throughout, by my own experiences during operations, the thoughts of Studdert Kennedy, MacLeod, Bonhoeffer and the general history on Naval Chaplaincy. What we found was that for the post modern individual denominationalism means little beyond cultural heritage. We discovered that chaplaincy at the front concentrated on the kernel of truth within the Christian faith, namely incarnation, cross and resurrection. All other matters of the faith, this thesis has found to be peripheral at best, ungodly and an opponent to the body of Christ at worst. Ordinary men and women often see this better than we ecclesiastics. We thus finished the chapter, looking for an answer to the outline of Bonhoeffer's book which might help our current church situation, just as Bonhoeffer had intended for his own church. John Levack advocated a maintenance of the parish structure for the Church of Scotland, but with a more outwardly missionary zeal towards those in the parish who were not in the building, but outside.

We noted the real missionary success of St. Francis in the East and Church House, which proved that with a Minister of vision, who would lead and direct a team ministry, economically backed up with resources, which would offer a worthwhile leisure activity to the man and woman in the street, that a church would flourish. This of course was done, recognising the talents and theological outlook of these team ministries, who lived the sacrificial life of service within their un-churched community. Just like Studdert Kennedy in the trenches on the Somme. We noted the importance

within all these team ministries of the preservation of a strong spiritual discipline, advocated by Foster, for the new millennium, to overcome the many difficulties for ministry in an un-churched environment. Bonhoeffer's, Woodbine Willie's and George MacLeod's words were also being borne out.

Finally for our stocktaking of Christianity we looked at the Church of Scotland's most recent report for change, 'Church Without Walls'. We noted that independent of this work many of its conclusions for change in the civilian church are supported by this research. Something both works can take reassurance from. The ordinary man in the street is no different from the military person. As post modern individuals they will live life in a community, surrounding work and leisure activities. The modern parish church, in order to get in contact with these people once more, must follow a model of chaplaincy ministry, as advocated in this thesis. For if it works for our community in the Royal Navy, so it should work within the broader church environment. The figures from the HMS OCEAN study give us great hope for the future, in as much as our figures for church attendance within a set age group 25-40 years, equated to the civilian church attendance figures for the age group 50-65 years. We have shown that the younger generation will return to church, when they feel the church is as much part of their community as the nightclub and when it offers worthwhile worship which puts them in touch with God. *Without Walls* has much to commend it.

Inevitably *Without Walls* could only be written from a Church

of Scotland point of view and where this thesis goes beyond the report is in the area of ecumenism and recognition. For the church to be truly the Church of Christ and one body, recognition of the sacramental ministries of all the churches in the world, who hold to the creedal truths must arrive. The vast majority of worshipping Christians believe this, as do the un-churched. These church schisms are a legacy of history, but we are not a people who should look back more than we look forward. For church unity in Scotland to truly work then, before any more discussions amongst the churches, the Episcopalian Church of Scotland (and thus Anglican communion) should recognise the valid ordination of Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the other uniting churches. With one voice we could then deal directly with the Roman Catholic Church and recognition. Only then will Bonhoeffer's vision of a truly *religionless Christianity* appear.

Our unity will be through the incarnation, life, teaching and example of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice on the cross (that we might have *at one ment* with the Father), and His resurrection through the Father's power, that He might send His Spirit to remain with us until the end of time. Recognition by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches of the valid ordination of Church of Scotland and Free Church Ministers would help greatly in the Naval Chaplaincy situation. It would honestly recognise what we all know to be true, despite the concordats. Any denominational chaplaincy is a start and leads us on our way, showing the civilian churches that where there is a will there is a way. The way of Christ. But it is based on the

love of Chaplain to another through mutual respect, shared prayer life and shared community. It is what *Without Walls* truly calls for and answers the Biblical injunction *to be one*. Any denominational chaplaincy is showing us the way, towards a *non religious Christianity*.

HMS OCEAN QUESTIONNAIRE

Would you please fill in the following questions as honestly as you can. The results of the questionnaire will be used in a thesis investigating religious belief in the Royal Navy and it will help the chaplaincy move forward in what we can provide for you into the millennium both spiritually and pastorally.

This questionnaire will remain anonymous. Please explain your answers as fully as you can to help the findings.

1. Are you married or living with a permanent partner?
2. If so, for how long?
3. Do you have any children?
4. If so, what age are they?
5. Were you married in a church or a registry office?
6. If you are planning to get married, where will and your partner choose to be married?
7. Have you ever been divorced?
8. If so, would you seek re-marriage in a church?
9. If you have children, are they baptised or are you thinking of getting them baptised?
10. Are you baptised?
11. In which church were you baptised?
12. Are you confirmed?
13. In which church, ie denomination (CE, CofS, Methodism, Presbyterian, Baptist, RC etc...) were you confirmed?
14. Do you have any contact with the church you were baptised or confirmed into now?
15. If you have no current civilian church contacts, do you attend church within the Royal Navy, either at sea or ashore?
16. Do you accept that the chaplain may not be of your own church and does this bother you?

17. Do you have any set ideas about how church services should be?
18. If you receive Holy Communion, would you so receive it from any Naval Chaplain, no matter his Christian Church background?
19. If you do not take communion, do you understand what it is, and does this prevent your attendance?
20. When you joined the Royal Navy you were asked what religion you were. Do you understand yourself in this religious context? Do you still regard yourself as that denomination?
21. Did you choose your own church connection or inherit it from your family background?
22. Do you normally attend a church different to the one named on your dog tags?
23. Why?
24. How do you understand the role of the Chaplain?
25. Does his/her denomination matter to you?
26. Have you ever used chaplaincy services?
27. Would you if the need arose or would you prefer Family Services support?
28. Do you understand yourself to be a Christian first and belonging to a specific church second?
29. Do you think there is any need for naval chaplaincy as we approach the millennium?
30. Do you think there is a difference between being 'religious' and being a Christian?
31. If so, is this linked to going to an any denominational service at sea and not going to a specific church at home?

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